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THE WORLD THAT GOD DESTROYED
AND OTHER POEMS

THE WORLD THAT GOD DESTROYED

AND OTHER POEMS

By

FREDERICK E. PIERCE

New Haven
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
MCMXI

PG 3wn
1911

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TO THE MOST PATIENT
AND LOVING OF ALL MY CRITICS
MY SISTER MARY

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TO THE READER

Out of the lone New England hills,
  Where fields are rocky and hearts are stern,
  Where there's much to suffer and much to learn,
And men build visions no God fulfills;

Out of the haunted elms of Yale,
  Where hopes have budded and friendships leaved,
  And the spirit in which her sons believed
Fired hero's effort and poet's tale;

Out of a hope that perhaps was vain;
  Out of a dream that he ne'er will rue,—
  Reader, the author speaks to you
In a world of wonder and joy and pain.

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THE WORLD THAT GOD DESTROYED
AND OTHER POEMS

THE WORLD THAT GOD DESTROYED

PROLOGUE

THE EVE OF THE DELUGE

The sun sank palled in dread;
  Birds hushed on bough;
"God is a myth," men said,
  As men do now.
Beneath the Eternal's frown
Loud reveled king and clown;
Blood flowed in field and town,
  None questioned how.

The dripping chaplet tied
  The harlot's brow;
Grave statesmen planned and lied,
  Secure as now.
As lions, drowsing, seem
To hunt in hungry dream,
Purred the great ocean stream
  Round cape and prow.

Night came; no face was pale;
  No prayer, no vow.
God stood behind the veil,
  As He does now.
Strange tints the heaven tinged,
Like light from doors unhinged;
And the wild panther cringed,
  And bird on bough.

Bards harped in halls impure;
  Slaves forged the plow;
Earth dreamed she should endure
  As long as now.
Next morning swam the whale
O'er throne and altar-rail.
'Twas an old Hebrew tale;
  But read it, thou.

ACT I.

TIME. The morning before the Deluge.

PLACE. A hill near the ark, commanding a view over the plain to the east and the city of Cain in its midst.

[*Enter Noah and a friend.*]

NOAH. There, kinsman, slow, like God's reluctant wrath,
Comes the last dawning of a world.
FRIEND. 'Tis calm,
As mild as mercy's front. For men so long
Cherished, forgiven, warned, and spared in vain,
'Twill neither warn nor spare.
NOAH. Is Javan come?
FRIEND. Last night his horsemen signaled from the plain;
An hour will bring him.
NOAH. Bold was he to linger
So far from home beneath the threat of Heaven.
FRIEND. Sad news will wait him; he loved Irad dearly.
NOAH. So did we all. Alas, the boy!

[*Enter attendant.*]

ATTENDANT. My chief.
NOAH. Your errand, sir?

ATTENDANT. An embassy from Nod.

NOAH. From Nod to-day! What irony works in heaven
To send them here to-day? What mission draws them?
Well, bring them hither. Will it not seem uncanny
To treat with dying states on doomsday morning?

FRIEND. And hear them roar as lions do, when, scratched
With poison darts, they're doomed and know it not.

[*Enter Tubal-cain with a splendid retinue.*]

TUBAL. I bring you greetings from the land of Nod.

NOAH. In the same will and temper we return them.
Wherein can Noah serve the sons of Cain?

TUBAL. In yielding them their own, too long unclaimed.
You hold a boy called Irad, one of us,
Ten moons detained as hostage here, a boy
Whom much we learned to love. We'd have him back;
And therefore am I come.

NOAH. Is Irad yours
Because Cain's daughter bore him, Cainite homes
Misled his years till manhood? Nay, his sire
Was my own brother, and his blood was ours.
Nor held we him as hostage; his free will

Made him prefer his father's people here,
Adopted, not detained. And would to God
I had no more to tell.

TUBAL. Ay, so you say.
Lies nestle green beneath a hoary beard
Like wheat beneath a snowdrift. Bring him here;
And see if, when the road lies open plain
To Nod, he'll feel adopted.

NOAH. Not so fast.
Love held him here with golden threads; now here
Will justice chain him. Dread has been the fruit
Of your ill schooling and his mother's blood.
The curse of Cain has found his child through you.
Enoch, my kin, is dead by him you seek.

TUBAL. Yea, so we heard and therefore came.
What then?
Revenge is for the strong and not for you.
Yield up the boy; or, by the serpent's head
That lost us Eden, to-morrow you shall hear
Our Cainite javelins rattling through your tents.
A dreadful day 'twill be.

NOAH. Dreadful indeed.
Thou canst not dream what little cause have I
To fear thy wrath to-morrow, nor what Arm
Shall be my proxy working death on thee.
Vaunt on; I dread thee not.

TUBAL. Then hark again.
My horsemen hold a captive down below,
Your youngest son, your Javan, taken but now,

Surety for Irad's life. To-morrow's sun,
If it see Irad on these hills with you,
Sees Javan down with us.

NOAH. To-morrow's sun
See Javan there! Eternal God forbid!

TUBAL. Or him or Irad; choose.

NOAH. Bring Irad hither.

[*Exit attendant.*]

FRIEND. Droop not; God works in this. Perchance last night
We judged too gently; blood demandeth blood.

NOAH. Let him not die red-handed! Lord of Nod,
How say you if the boy refuse to go,
Of his own choice remain?

TUBAL. In dreams I see him.

NOAH. But if he do, shall Javan then be free?

TUBAL. If he do this, or if the burning stars
Turn dancing eastward, then, and not before,
Shall you keep both.

FRIEND. Knew he what comes to-morrow
He then were safe.

NOAH. He knows not, yet may stay.
Let God inspire his answer, God decide.

[*Enter Irad.*]

Irad, the people of the plains demand you;
We'd keep you still. Here part the ways: with them

The false, bright glamour glittering o'er decay
Which here you learned to loathe; with us long years
Of penance hard and durance, but they form
Repentant stairs to God. Though jailers we,
Yet friends we are to save you from yourself.
Make public choice between us.

TUBAL. Choose, boy, choose.
We'll back your choice up with our bones and brawn;
And here's my valid signet. (*Drawing his sword.*)
Lad, you're pale.
They give you watery diet.

IRAD. No, I'm well,
And glad to see your grizzled face. But this,
What's this that I must do?

TUBAL. Our wines are flat
Without the boy we miss. Come home with us.

IRAD. What, now?

TUBAL. Why not? What drowsy godliness
Have you to pack? Come, share the wealth of friends.
We feast the gods to-night.

NOAH. Decide not rashly.
Strange things you know not are astir to-day
Might change your choice to-morrow.

IRAD. Had you come

But yester-morning! Blood since then has flowed,
And made me conscience' captive.

TUBAL. Let it flow.
We were not born to bleat like lambs, my lad;
And our o'er-zealous friend harangued too long.
'Twas a good blow.

IRAD. Yes, with a single stroke
I've killed one man and damned another.

TUBAL. Tut, tut!
I have been damned for centuries and have thrived.

IRAD. I beg an hour ere answering.

TUBAL. What! so cool
Between our love and dungeons!

NOAH. He is free,
May go or stay. Send Javan now to us.
Till then, my lord, you are our guest.

TUBAL. I thank you.
I'll take a nap and sleep away the time.
Think on old ties, my boy, think on old ties,
Who played with you, caroused with you, and stood
Bestriding you in battle. You'll not find
Their like in Noah's milk-and-water saints.
I'll see you in an hour.

[*Exit Tubal-cain and retinue. Music.*]

NOAH. What strains are these?

FRIEND. Hither they bring the dead for sunrise rite,
Our last farewell.

NOAH (*to Irad*). Wilt thou withdraw?
IRAD. I'll stay.
But tell not Javan, add not his reproach.
NOAH. He shall not know to-day.

[*Enter attendants with the body of Enoch.*]

Here lay him down.
Weep not; he journeys to eternal God.
All weakness which is flesh's heritage
Falls down like ashes burnt; and the clear fire,
Through æther leaping, seeks the sun that gave it.
Alas, my brother, yet rejoice. Farewell!

[*The Noahites move in procession around the bier, each laying a white wreath on it as he speaks.*]

FIRST NOAHITE. Farewell.
SECOND NOAHITE. Farewell.
THIRD NOAHITE. Farewell.
FOURTH NOAHITE. Farewell.
FIFTH NOAHITE. Farewell.

SONG

Where shall the champion rest,
The brave, the eager,
Who filled his Lord's behest
In field and leaguer?

For him all joys are blent,
  Long Sabbath keeping
Soft in Jehovah's tent,
  Like children sleeping.

More grand than stone could rear
  His tomb is founded,
The sea that wraps the sphere,
  Blue and unbounded.

Farewell! Hard task have we
  New worlds restoring.
Some day we'll rest with thee,
  Our God adoring.

Where the great feast is spread
  And lamps are lighted,
Shall we beyond the dead
  Be yet united.

IRAD. And shall I also dare to say farewell?
Stern hast thou been, yet may'st relent to know
Who sent thee hence now mourns. Alas my deed!
So far from all I purposed! Is it true
That in my veins wells up the ancient curse?
Am I a thing at odds with life, akin
To upas-tree and tiger? Must the world
Kill me or die by me? In what far years
Did my dead fathers rob their heirs of hope,
Blasting their self-control?

[*Enter Javan.*]

JAVAN. Where lies our dead?

NOAH. Behold.

JAVAN. Can heart so fiery be so still?
Rash was thy tongue and stern, unhappy man,
Which hath provoked too much some son of Cain.
Forgive me that in life I jarred with thee.
Rest happy and farewell.

NOAH. Bear hence the dead.
And, Javan, as thou lovest Irad well,
Remain and speak with him. The Cainite lords
Wait here to bear him back.

[*Exeunt all except Irad and Javan.*]

JAVAN. You play with us.
You cannot think in earnest you will go.

IRAD. Why not? The voice that calls the homing wren
Calls me where I was born. Look down where stands
Cain's ancient city, while the morning hush
Descends on amphitheater, park, and dome.
There lie my mother's and my father's graves;
There lives my grandsire, Jared, weak and old,
Who calls for me in vain. There watches Adah,
My love, abruptly, cruelly left by me.
Shall these not draw me home?

JAVAN. All there is evil.
Good with the good should bide, and you with us.

IRAD. Oh, never say that all in Cain is evil,—
That roseate glow in which prosaic life
Grows beautiful, imperial, strong. To-night
They hold their feast to Niloh, god of harvest.
All barriers broken, there the joy of life
Pours out in flood: all wealth of nature's realm,
In fruit or blossom or enchanting wine,
Or mystery of love, the whole night long
Observed by happy youth; all wealth of art,
Heaped up by lake or fountain, piled profuse
In dome or gallery, pouring on the ear
In melody to which in earth and star
Breath universal moves. Is Niloh evil,
Great source of life and life's romance as well?

JAVAN. Yet ever at his name my father frowns.
Wouldst thou that I should worship Niloh?

IRAD. No.

JAVAN. Why not, if he is good?

IRAD. He is not good.
That I unsay; incarnate sin is he;
But sin that makes all life enchanted ground.
'Tis virtuous winter here; and I'd be gone,
Like birds that migrate to the sunny south,
To find where rapture dwells.

JAVAN. Dwells it not here?
Oh, yes, all beauty, joy of youth and bard,
Untainted and eternal joy. But now,
On yonder mountain, scratched along the stone,
I found an old and rainbeat stave of song

Which legends tell that martyred Abel made.
Men say he used to climb Niphates' peak,
From whence his eye looked like an eagle down
On the Forbidden Garden. There he drew
The beauty of the landscape through his soul
Like breath through nostrils; poured it out in song
That made all life seem miracle. And more,
Emotion warm as day and vast as night,
Lives musical among the sons of Seth.
Stay here with me. You taught me first to know
The joy of being. I'll teach you in turn
To find it on our wild and healthful hills,
Free as in yonder city.

IRAD. So you might,
Came memories not between. Last night I dreamed
You stood and watched me through a bloody glass,
And through that glass would watch me evermore,
Seeing my face as hideous.

JAVAN. What is this?

IRAD. A dream, no more. But dreams like this will come
To break my rest, while here I wait and pine
In the dull chill of unaccustomed ways,
A tolerated alien. And in Nod
Foams the rich wine that makes the heart forget.
I'll mourn thee, Javan, more than thou wilt me;
But go I must.

JAVAN. Now by Jehovah, no!

IRAD. Yea, lad; my will is fixed. We've long been friends;
But now 'tis parting time.
JAVAN. So mad! Then hear
What still from thee we kept, a truth so dread
To one whose friends and kindred dwell below
I'd fain conceal it still. When first you came
Did not my father tell you earth was doomed?
And that tremendous ship at anchor near,
High on this mountain lake, a century's work,
Know you not why he built it?
IRAD. Yea, I know.
Doomsday is coming; but 'tis years away;
And I and mine may live, be glad, and die,
Ere the great Deluge swell.
JAVAN. Nay, there you err.
Not years nor months nor even days, but hours
Shall be your life in Nod. The time is now.
Even at this moment God's avenging Flood
Is gathering o'er the nations.
IRAD. You are mad!
JAVAN. Look westward where I point. Just visible
Beyond those hilltops lies the ocean shore
In the blue distance. Look, do you not see
Strange clouds of smoky mist, that heavenward
Roll from the deep, and pile themselves aloft
Like rocks that soldiers pile on city walls
To hurl upon invaders? Breeze is none,

And still they stand. But with the night shall blow
A western wind to drive them, dark with doom,
O'er earth, and pouring from their cup the sea.
And hark; with straining ear can you not catch
From that same west a strange, deep, boding
sound?
There crack the dykes of ocean; there awakes,
Reluctant from the sleep of centuries,
A monster huger than leviathan,
The dim, dread deep itself. The hour has come.
To-day the race of Cain, the land of Nod,
Rejoice at Niloh's knee. At dawn to-morrow
Race, god, and country, all that glittering life,
Its beauty, blasphemy, and glory, and sin,
Shall pave the ocean bottom. There from the west,
Where break the fountains of the deep, and loom
The freighted clouds of judgment, even now
Comes God to cleanse His world.

IRAD. Eternal Powers!

JAVAN. At noon must all embark, the doors be
sealed.
And all on whom those doors shall close, all life,
Man, bird, or animal, or crawling snake,
Is doomed. You shall not go!

IRAD. Oh, stand aside!
Leave me to my own thoughts!

[*Javan withdraws to the side of the scene.*]

Is this a dream?

There's not one thing in field or town or air
But seems as it hath seemed ten thousand times
In life's untroubled course. The face of heaven,
Oft called the countenance of the Living God,
Appears one kindly smile. And far and near
With such infectious confidence move on
The race of men, what heart can help but feel
With them that all is well! Worlds should not die
Puffed out like candles, blown away like mist.
Yet one I trust declares it so from Heaven.
O God, if God Thou art, is it not terrible
To think old homes and ties, ancestral graves,
Friends once beloved, those landmarks where our lives
Took root and grew, should mix with ocean mud;
And all we worshiped, loved, and lived for, be
One blank of waters! Never, never, never!
Heaven would not be so stern. Men mark alone
The tilted scale; God knows what mountain loads
Of human goodness tugged the wavering beam
With earth's tremendous guilt. It cannot be!
Be merciful, be merciful, O God!

[*He throws himself on his face and is silent. Then after a pause he speaks again.*]

Suppose it true, shall I in Noah's ark
Crouch like a dog while friend and kinsman drown?
There watch the corpse of Adah drifting by,
Her hair afloat like sea-weed, and her bosom

Nosed by the shark; and when the Flood goes down,
Serve aliens o'er my dead, while from his tomb
Enoch shall haunt my sleep?

[*Enter Tubal-cain.*]

Oh, is it you?
Come, brother spirit, you can laugh at death,
Given or received. Come, and we'll laugh together.
One whole long day of joy is ours; away!

JAVAN. Irad, where go you?

IRAD. Where my people are.
Into the joy of one last Niloh's feast,
Into the night where dim oblivion dwells,
And guilt has peace; where my hot murderer's heart
May sleep as quiet as my great father Cain's!
Sorrow to sorrow calls, and crime to crime;
And theirs I am for earth and for all time!

[*He rushes away.*]

TUBAL. His choice is made. Adieu.

JAVAN. One question first.
Enoch is dead.

TUBAL. I know it.

JAVAN. Know it! How?
Were you his murderer?

TUBAL. Think so if you will.
I'll ne'er object.

JAVAN (*turning from him*). His blood is on your soul.
Forgive me, Irad, what I dared to think.
(*Calling*) Wait, friend, one moment!

TUBAL. Youngster, not so fast.
You stir not hence a step till he is safe
O'er yonder boundary where my horsemen wait.

JAVAN. Ruffian, I'll dog thy flight but he shall hear.

TUBAL. Good friend, you are too young to loathe your life.
Take my advice and bide on Noah's ground.
There's danger yonder.

JAVAN. What fiend made you so strong?

TUBAL. He mounts and rides; they wait for me. Farewell.

[*Half draws his sword with a menacing gesture, and exit.*]

JAVAN. Gone, gone!

[*Enter a Noahite.*]

NOAHITE. Is Irad fled?

JAVAN. Fled to his doom.

NOAHITE. God's will is hard.

JAVAN. At friendship's call he dies.
Shall I do less? Look there! Against the dawn
How high towers Himenay o'er the mountains round!

Has God not said when seas o'er mountains flowed
On Himenay's peak the ark should find dry land?

NOAHITE. Even so.

JAVAN. Enough! A god might stand on tiptoe,
And yet not reach its crest to pull you down.
What think you, man?

NOAHITE. How now? Your looks are wild.

JAVAN. Go, bid them bring my horse.

NOAHITE. Ride not to-day.
At noon the doors are sealed; when that is done
Noah's own child might knock unheard.

JAVAN. Be gone.
I shall not knock after the doors are sealed.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

Scene I.

Time. The eve of the Deluge.

Place. The great square in the center of Cain's city. In the background is a statue of Niloh, the harvest god, "the reaper of delight." On one side are lofty buildings; on the other the grounds of a magnificent park. Beyond is a glimpse of the western horizon piled with strange looking clouds. The scene begins at twilight, but night gathers as it progresses. A crowd gradually forms around the pedestal of the statue.

[*Enter four gallants singing.*]

First Gallant.

Come, gather, friends; one more carouse,
While stars benign in heaven house,
And tinkling lyre and torch invite
To taste the joy of Niloh's night.

Second Gallant.

The darkened hours begin to bud
On Time's old trunk for us to pull;
Enchantment warms the lover's blood;
The vineyard's magic tide is full.

THIRD GALLANT.

Deem not the gods forbid to drink
The cup of joy they deign to brew;
The throned immortals laugh and wink
At what they would and would not view.

FOURTH GALLANT.

Waste not what Nature ne'er renews;
She'll warm no more the faded flowers,
Nor offer twice what we refuse
When life and lovely youth are ours.

FIRST GALLANT. But remember before we part that you are all to come down to-morrow and share my villa in the hills. Everything which you wish shall be there at your disposal. Would you feast, we have loaded our tables with meats and wines. Would you hear musicians or see paintings, we have the best in Nod. Would you sail on the waters of Dreamland, we will launch you with lotus and poppy. Nay, if you wish, you may even find the roguish Loves playing at hide-and-seek in a corner. Gardens are there as pleasant as old Adam's Eden, and unlimited time before us to enjoy them. You'll come?

SECOND, THIRD AND FOURTH GALLANTS. We'll not forget.

SECOND GALLANT. Will the poet Iban be there?

FIRST GALLANT. He joins us later.

THIRD GALLANT. He is a genius, Iban.

FOURTH GALLANT. I preferred Bahran; he had the fire.

SECOND AND THIRD GALLANTS. Oh, no, Iban forever! What technique!

FIRST GALLANT. We start at noon to-morrow.

(*It lightens in the west.*)

[*They move on. Two corpses are borne in and halted before the shrine. Enter Javan and a Cainite.*]

CAINITE. There stands the shrine; there soon your friend must come.

JAVAN. What dead are here?

CAINITE. It is the poet Bahran.

JAVAN. He looks like Irad. Oft my cousin praised him.
Did Heaven love him that he died to-day,
Or mark him first for wrath? What boy is this?

CAINITE. Did you not know? He was the prettiest lad.
Bahran left wife and mistress, friend and home
For love of him, adored him, hung their chamber
With curtains worth a province, built sweet fountains
By which they lay together.

JAVAN. Was their bond
Pure or polluted?

CAINITE. Let their foes inquire,

Their friends but say they loved. The boy died first.
He had the fever; Bahran watched with him;
And when he saw the form he loved grow cold,
He killed himself. "Nor man nor woman more
Shall share my love," he said, and speaking died,
His arms around his playmate.

JAVAN. Irad's Bahran.

CAINITE. His home was like a palace, and his gardens
The loveliest thing on earth; a nation praised him.

JAVAN. Where goes he now?

CAINITE. All night to lie in state
Within the dome. His funeral is to-morrow.
Sad day 'twill be. Adieu.

[*Exit.*]

JAVAN. He looks like one
Whose vice entombed a dead and nobler self.

[*He stands aside. Enter a man and woman.*]

MAN. Will you not yield? It is the lovers' hour.
Clear trills the bird of love, and twinkling beams
The orb of lovers. I have wooed you long.
Why was this beauty given you? Why to me
This burning blood and power to taste delight?

WOMAN. I have a husband.

MAN. So has many a woman.
I know a fountain welling up in stone

As fair as you. Its waves are ever sweet,
Though more than one has tasted.

WOMAN. Ever sweet
While tasted only. Should you plunge and wallow,
Who'd care to drink that gentle fountain then?
Restrained delight is dearest.

MAN. Not forever.

WOMAN. To-night my husband and myself must watch
In Niloh's worship; but, beloved, to-morrow—
Ah, then—

MAN. Oh, much will mean that word "to-morrow"!
No eye shall see us where we're lying then,
Nor any husband know.

WOMAN. And now goodnight.
How sweet is life! And 'twill be doubly sweet
To-morrow! (*It lightens in the west.*)

[*They pass on. Enter Irad.*]

JAVAN. My cousin Irad!

IRAD. How, misguided boy!
What evil genius led your wanderings here
To-night of all the years?

JAVAN. The name of friend.

IRAD. Wilt share my fortunes, then, and fly with me?

JAVAN. To earth's four windy corners, if you will.

IRAD. Look yonder where the mountains loom; up them
We'll climb past ocean's reach.
JAVAN. Nay, nay, not there.
In three short days those puny peaks will be
But rocks in ocean's bed. I've risked my life
To show a safer way. 'Tis yonder, see,
Up Himenay's peak; for there, as God has said,
After the Flood the ark shall find dry land.
IRAD. That way is long, the Deluge close.
JAVAN. No more!
Take that or nothing; lesser heights are death.

[*Enter Tubal-cain.*]

IRAD. You empty-handed too, nor found our friends?
TUBAL. They march in Niloh's column, this I learned.
We'll wait it here and meet them; better so.
IRAD. I've wasted golden hours in this pursuit
We ill could spare, and traversed all the town,
Home, hall, and council chamber.
TUBAL. Well, be calm.
Long absence weaned you from our life; this tour
Of high and low refreshed the faded lines,
Renewed the picture.
IRAD. Work of burning pencils
Were not more vivid. Eager everywhere

The people trod each other's heels, as though
There were a million morrows.

TUBAL. Well, there are.

IRAD. The lords in council voted richer hangings
Around their hall. Near by were masons laying
A castle's corner-stone. Beside the way
I met three children gay as crickets dancing,
Who, when I asked their cause of gladness, piped:
"The holidays have come, the holidays
Begin to-night." And one, a little maid,
Whose face was like a blossom, cried, "To-morrow
We'll gather Niloh's roses." Then a mother,
With sunken face, but smiling, told a neighbor
That now her griefs were done, her son, imprisoned
Long years ago, would be released to-morrow.
You would have thought the hoarded bliss of earth
Was in that word "to-morrow."

TUBAL. What's all this?

IRAD. I'll let thee know at dawning.

TUBAL. Hark, the music!
'Tis Niloh's trumpet that the choristers
Are blowing as they march. Our friends are coming.

[*Enter in procession the priests of Niloh, led by the high pontiff. They are dressed in purple with golden ornaments, and as emblems carry broken fetters. Last in the procession moves the blind Jared, led by another priest. They*

circle three times around the idol, singing to music.]

SONG

We dwelt in the valley of thunder,
And the Elohim sat on the edge;
The Heavens were holding us under,
And the lightning came down like a wedge.
And the cherubim, armored and sworded,
Flew sentinel, dreadful to see;
While like misers we garnered and hoarded
Life's treasure for ages to be.
But Niloh came manteled in beauty
Through the valley of woe and affright;
He hewed down the thorn-tree of Duty,
And planted the rose of Delight.
Through pleasure exulting or tender
He led us like monarchs released;
And he housed us pavilioned in splendor,
And placed us forever at feast.
Let our children from cycle to cycle
Lament that their coffers are void;
But though Eden is guarded by Michael,
Despite him we've lived and enjoyed.
And our fame till the mountains are leveled,
Like a cloud that the sunset has laved,
Shall tell in what glory we reveled
On the wealth that the ages had saved.

[*Irad draws aside Jared and his companion, while the other priests move on.*]

JARED. What voice is this I hear? Is it not Irad?

IRAD. Ten moons you heard it not. Is it so dear
You know it now?

JARED. Ah, boy, these blind old eyes
Have wept thee many an hour.

IRAD. Your blessing, sir.

JARED. All Niloh's joys and length of years be thine.

PRIEST. Your face makes summer in an old man's life.
You'll feast with me to-night?

IRAD. Your pardon, sir;
I've other work.

PRIEST. A-ha! this other work!
Young blood, young blood! I have been young, and known
What Niloh gave, the wondrous body of youth.
I am not jealous. 'Tis a sightly night;
Dark clouds along the west, but clear above.
How dim the stars are! What's that light that burns
Behind Orion yonder?

TUBAL. There's another
Off to the north, and eastward gleams a third.

PRIEST. They come and go. There shines another out,
As if a window opened in the sky
And closed again.
JAVAN. Adown the south they gleam
Like rents in burning walls that part and totter!
PRIEST. What mean these silent fires in open heaven?
TUBAL. Now I was ever a cheery augur, man.
I deem the gods, carousing in the sky,
Are sprawled in ecstasy, upsetting round
Celestial torch and cresset. And if so,
Why, we'll do what we please, and drowsy Heaven
Be none the wiser.
JAVAN. That's a daring jest!
TUBAL. Nay, Sethite; thought so reverent never lit
Thy dingy brain, devising gods of whey.
Where the Great Reaper, girt with lambent life,
In life's wild maelstrom which his pulses share,
Reels on through nodding heaven and rushing star,
There is a deity, an existence there
Which scorns your pap and swaddling laws—divine!
PRIEST. The western wind blows keen. O'er Noah's hill
How black the tempest heaves!
TUBAL. I'm still perverse.
That biggest cloud, just o'er the central peak,

Appears a giant cask, that jovial gods
Would stave o'er earth in oceans.

IRAD. Hark, the music!

[*Enter a chorus of Bacchants. They wear garlands in which bunches of grapes are entwined with lotus leaves and the flowers of the opium poppy. In their hands some carry goblets of wine, others leaves of lotus or heads of poppy. They circle around the idol, singing.*]

SONG

Which has more power,—
  And who shall determine?—
Fruitage and flower,
  Or king in the ermine?
Which has more use
  To heighten life's meaning,
Petal and juice,
  Or gold of thy gleaning?
Wrapped in the rind,
  Instilled in the stamen,
More in its kind
  Than fighter or flamen;
Stored in the stem,
  Enclosed in the anther,
Fairer than gem,
  And fiercer than panther;

Deeps of desire
And manhood amassing,
Focused like fire
On the hour that is passing;
Doomed by decree,
And falsely forbidden,—
Here is the key
Of the hoard that was hidden.
Bards beyond count
Till ages are hoary,
Fed from the fount,
Shall sing of its glory.

A BACCHANT. 'Tis Irad. Welcome, welcome back to Nod!

BACCHANTS. Ho, Irad, Irad, join the dance with us!

IRAD. No, not to-night. Comrades, farewell, farewell!

[*The chorus moves on. Enter a conspirator, approaching Javan.*]

CONSPIRATOR. Hist, brother.

JAVAN. Who are you?

CONSPIRATOR. Nay, be not strange. What will the morning prove?

JAVAN. A thing of dread.

CONSPIRATOR. Then he you are to whom they sent me here.

It works apace. All's ready, all in train;
Your trumpet blown will throw a kingdom down.

JAVAN. When so?

CONSPIRATOR. At sunrise; thus 'tis understood.

JAVAN. At sunrise be it.

CONSPIRATOR. Then we'll meet again.
Laugh, giddy crowd. From mendicant to king,
None dream but us of what the morn will bring.
Speed, hours of night; for while ye hold the sky
We are but men, as men may fail and die.
But soon will dawn the wished for day, and we
Be lords of all the land our eyes can see.

[*He moves on. Enter a chorus of poets and artists of all kinds. They bear various instruments of their different callings. In their midst on a splendid litter they carry Adah, enthroned as the Goddess of Beauty and Pleasure. They circle the idol and sing.*]

SONG

Wherefore should art
  Upon conscience be founded,
Searching the heart
  Like an ocean unsounded?
Why should it point
  To a path for pursuing,
Vainly anoint
  Eyes weary of viewing?

Art is divine
  But softer and sweeter,
Lovely in line,
  And mystic in meter;
Waking the nerve
  O'er the wisdom that slumbers,
Graceful of curve,
  And noble in numbers.
Bound in its mesh
  Is the fay that was fleeing,
Joy of the flesh
  And beauty of being.
Life in its bowl
  To a drop it condenses,
Lulling the soul,
  And charming the senses.
Vainly the years
  Would banish or bind it;
Deep it inheres,
  And the future shall find it.

[*Adah descends and places her tiara on the knee of Niloh. The chorus kneel while she does so, and then move on. As Adah turns away from the statue she meets Irad.*]

ADAH. Whence comest thou unlooked for?
IRAD. Lo, I'm kneeling
And weeping, Adah. Thou art pale. How far
I sinned in flight from what I deemed as sin!

ADAH. Art thou returned? Why didst thou leave me so?

IRAD. I'll tell thee later, but forgive me now.

ADAH. From what fair daughter of the race of Seth
Com'st thou to me for change?

IRAD. No woman's face
Has filled my heart but thine. Thy only rivals
Were dreams that now are dead. Wilt thou forgive me?

ADAH. What else can woman do? Too well you know
Our hearts are clay where yours are hammered steel.

IRAD. Are these hot drops that tremble on my cheek
Like metal plummets? Do my warm lips feel
Like chilling iron?

JARED. Clasp each other close.
'Tis Niloh's night, and Niloh's blessing falls
On love and lovers. I'm a gray old stump,
But in my children's joy my youth reblossoms.

[*Enter a procession of young men and women marching in couples chained together with flowers, and accompanied by little children dressed as Loves. They circle around the idol, and sing.*]

SONG

Why should the bee
  Become bound if it settle,
Whose flight might be free
  From petal to petal?
Why should the pear
  Fall fresh and untasted?
Or unbreathed be the air
  Round the jasmine, and wasted?
Why should we thirst
  Among fountains for quaffing?
Why two be accurst
  When both might be laughing?
Why was the sun
  Made common and cheering
If light we should shun,
  Or feed on it fearing?
Strength may decay,
  But its uses are over;
The puny can play,
  And the least be a lover.
God is ensealed
  In the peach, as its Former;
But more sweetly revealed
  In what's rounder and warmer.
Hosts have no hire,
  And archers are idle,
While Youth and Desire
  Go marching to bridal.

THE MEN. Ho, Irad, Irad, clasp thy love and come!

THE WOMEN. Come, Adah, come! Ten moons thy life was cold
Because thou loved'st one, and he is here.
The night is Niloh's; clasp thy love and come!

IRAD. Stern gods forbid. Playmates, farewell, farewell!

JAVAN. Let us go hence! God comes at dawn.

IRAD. Yea, true.
Grandfather, Tubal-cain, draw near to me.
'Tis Niloh's night when he is lord supreme;
His slightest breath we must obey as law.
But now, delivered through his aged priest,
To me his summons came. He bids us all,
Before his hour is past, in pilgrimage
To seek his temple on Mount Himenay,
A rite that all should do, that never yet
Our family have done. Our horses wait
All ready saddled, and the god commands.
Our servants are at hand, all things prepared.
Let us be gone.

JARED. Ha, ha, impulsive boy!
Is Adah's heart so hard to reconcile,
Her love so unlike others, nought will serve
But holiest ground; and we must post all night
To find what's here at home? Come, lad, I'm old,
Unfit for such wild gallops. Niloh's orders,—

Oh, well, I know him; he's a kindly god;
He'll wink and laugh. Be reasonable, stay here.
IRAD. I have a litter borne on horses near
For you and Adah. Come!
ADAH. Wait here till morning.
We'll travel warm in sunlight where the road
Winds high above the sightly earth, and look
For miles below us. All the land will be
One glorious picture in the light to-morrow.
We'd lose all this at night.
IRAD. 'Twill be a picture—
No, let that rest. Oh, haste! What comes ere dawn
Would justify a hundred times as much.
TUBAL. A storm is blowing up; look over there.
'Twill strike us now before we reach the mountain.
Stay here by jolly fires and good dry halls;
Who'd wander drenched among the rainy woods
Such nights as this will be?
JARED. Feel how the wind
Is rushing from the west. My aching bones
Do prophesy an evil night for them.
There comes the thunder.
JAVAN. What a flash was that!
It looked as if the floor of heaven were split,
And eyes could peer beyond.
ADAH. What lights are those
Which move like spreading cracks along the sky?
There's something strange abroad. O Irad, stay!

IRAD. By heaven, I've reasons such as ne'er were man's.
We race with death. On, ere that tempest come!
TUBAL. We are not children; give us reasons why,
And I'll ride with you to the devil's jaws.
Without them I'll not budge.
IRAD. Are we alone?
TUBAL. No soul but us.
IRAD. Then listen. As I reached the town to-day,
Kneeling in Niloh's temple to make prayer
For my success,—'twas the hour, Tubal-cain,
When you had left me on your own affair,—
The high priest saw me there, and drawing me
Apart behind the altar said: "Young man,
I love your family well, and this you know;
But there are others here whose hate to you
Is deep as is my love. In Niloh's name
I order you and yours on pilgrimage
To Himenay's top; and see that you be gone
Before the midnight ring. If here you stay,
I say not whether wrath of gods or men,
But something you must fear."
JARED. Ah, there it is.
I've watched them creeping into coil; and now
They'd strike on Niloh's eve. Well, well, we'll go.
Better the rain a-patter on our heads
Than daggers in our ribs.

TUBAL. Yes, get to horse!
To-night we'll ride for life; but red will be
Our reckoning when the fatal see-saw turns.

JARED. Are we provisioned for a siege like this?

TUBAL. The stores of years are in the temple vaults.

IRAD. On, on! for fast and dread are those behind!

[*Exeunt.*]

CURTAIN.

Scene II.

Time. Somewhat later on the same night.

Place. A ferry at the foot of Mount Himenay.

[*Enter Javan, an attendant, and the ferryman.*]

Attendant. Here lies the landing; here the rest must gather.
We'll hunt no more through night and mud; wait here.

Ferryman. Then more are coming?

Attendant. We lost them in the dark.
Have you a boat to ferry us to the mountain?

Ferryman. It lies below.

Javan. Go you and see it ready.
I'll wait them here.

[*Exeunt attendant and ferryman.*]

Whom wait I? What are these,
My cousin's people? Is he one with them,
A part of that I've seen? From what wild forces
Arose a world so beauteous and so bad?
Where, where and what am I, and what the future
That waits for me and Irad, drifting far
From safe tradition o'er uncharted seas?
God of my fathers, reach me down Thy hand,
That I may clasp it in the night. I fear.

[*Enter an overseer of the farming district and a merchant.*]

Is Irad come? Are ye his followers?

MERCHANT. Nay.

OVERSEER. Nay, if by Irad you mean lord Irad of the great city, we come even now from discarding his livery. Many a year these estates were his and his mother's before him. They have nourished his pleasures well, though they never saw his face. Now his reign is out; let them serve the pleasures of others.

JAVAN. These, then, are Irad's lands?

MERCHANT. They were, sir, but are no longer. For all these ancestral acres his claim is forfeited. At sunrise they're mine.

OVERSEER. You will find them sadly dilapidated. Nowadays men drive estates, like horses, till they drop. Present gain, present gladness, that's all they think of; and the accounts of the future may be settled by the poor devils who're born then.

MERCHANT. Well, sir, why should not the men of the future pay the bills of the future?

OVERSEER. Because, saving your worship, the world doesn't go that way. Our fathers laid foundation for our prosperity; and if we lay none for our sons, who shall?

MERCHANT. If our fathers worked so hard to make us happy, heaven forbid that we should dis-

appoint them. The toil of their vine-dressing effervesces in our wines; the sweat of their masons floats in cool breezes through our summer villas; the aching eyes of their weavers have made the couch of my mistress downy. Every pleasure which I deny myself means that a day's work of some ancestor was done for nothing.

OVERSEER. Think of these roads they built, these dams and granaries of hewn stone. We use them while they last, and, instead of repairing them, spend our surplus on baths and pavilions. Yonder our fathers ditched morasses into meadows; and now the children gulp down the profits and let the meadow sink back into a morass. They are so busy squandering money in midnight banquets that they cannot stop for mending a rotten sluice to preserve the patrimony of their children.

MERCHANT. 'Tis meadow yet; 'twill last our lifetime. (*Aside to Javan.*) But tap one of these ancient barrels with hoary cobwebs around its chin, and out spurt the praises of "the good old days." (*Aloud.*) You have a wide variety here in your farming.

OVERSEER. We raise everything which the market demands; all kinds of drugs, from lotus and poppy for making your friend happy to hemlock and strychnine for making your enemy sad; wines and sauces in abundance; and all these other newfangled notions which, after a thousand years of

comfort, men have suddenly discovered to be necessities of life. Also our hillsides rear boys and women, though they grow not on stalks; but that lucrative industry is a special perquisite of others than the landlord.

JAVAN (*aside*). Is this the tillage which replaces the sweet gums and orchards of Eden? (*Aloud.*) What parodies of humanity come here?

[*Enter six laborers.*]

OVERSEER. Yonder men are laborers on the estate.

MERCHANT. What a dog's life is that! Why do these fools persist in living when they're so cadaverous that the light shines through them?

OVERSEER. For the same reason that your fine nobles persist in living when their nerves are so racked with feasting that hell squirms through them.

JAVAN. What work can so deface the body God made?

OVERSEER. No two have the same. The first works in the poppy fields; the second's a mason on the new villa; the third raises herbs for a sauce; the fourth cultivates silkworms for ladies' mantels; and the last two serve the cause of art.

JAVAN. How so?

OVERSEER. One of them quarries out marble for

our finest sculptors, and the other forges metal for the best harps in the city.

JAVAN. Did they ever see statue or hear harp?

OVERSEER. They see nothing but work and hear nothing but threats. How else should I raise my lord's revenue?

JAVAN. And how long do they last before nature takes pity on them?

OVERSEER. Some three years, some five. There are plenty more when these are gone.

MERCHANT. I confess that I am never more happy than in the presence of these wretches; for then, like one whose fortunes are safe while another's are burning, I thrill with the sense of my own blessedness. What says the song of Bakran?

Life that is pink in the sky and the maiden's cheek,
And the peach when it flowers,
Life that has tasted much and has more to seek,
Is ours, is ours.
What the grudging old gods had meant for the many, distills
Its bliss for the few.
The vineyards and fruits that grow on a thousand hills
Are for me and you.
Leave the bird in the net,
And the bud o'er the scythe;
Let the laborer sweat,

And the sufferer writhe;
To the camel his load,
To the Sethite his code;
But the dream of the magic herb, and our myrtle bowers,
Where we eat of the substance of others, are glad, and forget,
All that Old Eden possessed, and what Eden ne'er showed,
Are ours, are ours.

Well, let us go in. There's a fearful storm mustering overhead; pray heaven it hurt not my crops or buildings!

OVERSEER (*moving away, while a faint gleam of light gives his face a momentary likeness to a death's-head*). I will report, sir, in the morning, that we may take a survey of your new property together.

[*Exeunt overseer and merchant.*]

JAVAN. What men are these, whose rustic cots have life
Wondrous and wicked as the town's itself?

[*He sits down in a small arbor which conceals him from the center of the scene.*]

The fatal hours run on, yet wherefore fear?
Things worse there are than death, that threaten here.

FIRST LABORER. Ugh! I'm tired.

SECOND LABORER. Rain coming.

THIRD LABORER. Let it come.

FOURTH LABORER. Give me a mouthful. I've no food.

FIRST LABORER. Not I.

SECOND LABORER. Nor I.

THIRD LABORER. Every man for himself.

FOURTH LABORER. No drink either? I'm faint.

FIRST LABORER. None to spare.

FOURTH LABORER. I've worked day and night.

SECOND LABORER. Who hasn't?

FOURTH LABORER. One drink, as you'd like it yourself.

THIRD LABORER. Not I. Will your guzzling wet my gullet?

FIFTH LABORER. Wild night up there.

SIXTH LABORER. What's the difference to us?

FIRST LABORER. We work, rain or shine.

SECOND LABORER. Look there. (*Shows broken hand.*)

THIRD LABORER. Well, what of it?

SECOND LABORER. That's what we masons have to work with.

FIRST LABORER. That's nothing. Look what we do.

FIFTH LABORER. Raise lotus and poppies?

FIRST LABORER. Break men's backs to put gentlemen dreaming.

FOURTH LABORER. Got any lotus?

FIRST LABORER. Some I stole. No, you don't get it.

THIRD LABORER. And we kill ourselves to make a sauce.

SIXTH LABORER. What for?

THIRD LABORER. To make gentlemen hungry.

FOURTH LABORER. Let them fast.

SECOND LABORER. Not they; they're always feasting.

THIRD LABORER. And the sauce keeps them healthy and hungry.

FIFTH LABORER. Yes, and poor men starve a year to get them one meal of birds' tongues.

THIRD LABORER. That what you do?

FIFTH LABORER. Not now. Working in quarry. See there. (*Shows scars.*)

SIXTH LABORER. Stone for building?

FIFTH LABORER. No, statues.

FOURTH LABORER. One leaf of poppy?

FIRST LABORER. Get out! Can't you earn your own supper?

FOURTH LABORER. I ought to. I work hard enough.

FIRST LABORER. Doing what?

FOURTH LABORER. Weaving silk mantels. I'm going blind at it.

SIXTH LABORER. So am I.

SECOND LABORER. What, working in the forge?

SIXTH LABORER. Yes, the glare burns my eyes.

THIRD LABORER. Ugh, I dreamed I was a lord last night.

FIRST LABORER. The more fool you.

THIRD LABORER. Kept others working while I feasted. 'Twas fine.

FIFTH LABORER. Dreams go by contraries.

THIRD LABORER. Thought I got angry and killed two of them.

SIXTH LABORER. Look out or they'll kill you.

SECOND LABORER. Much he'd care or any of us.

FIRST LABORER. That's right. What good's life to us?

FOURTH LABORER. If I could only go to sleep to-night and know I'd never wake up again, I'd be happy.

SIXTH LABORER. So would I.

THIRD LABORER. Only I wish the rich could die too to make things even.

FIFTH LABORER. No hope of that. Come, we'll crawl off to our kennels.

SIXTH LABORER. And to work again in the morning.

[*Exeunt laborers. Enter Irad, Tubal-cain, Adah and ferryman.*]

FERRYMAN. Be not angry, sir; 'tis a slight delay. We had not dreamed that any would tempt the ferry to-night.

TUBAL. Sit down, man, and be calm. We have driven as if Panic were our jockey. Your lunatic haste will mean nothing but final delay. To brain our guide for misleading us,—that is a hopeful way of making speed.

IRAD. Ah, you know not what Terror pursues me. But indeed I meant not to kill him.

FERRYMAN. Step within, sirs, and be sheltered. The boat will be here in a moment.

[*Exeunt all except Irad and Adah. They seat themselves near the arbor, in which Javan remains unseen.*]

IRAD. Nay, Adah, stay with me; this bench for us.
Love keeps apart and private. Twine our fingers.
We plunge in darkness; and we'll feel, like children,
Less frightened hand in hand.

ADAH. How black it grows,
How wild o'erhead! Strange air for Niloh's night.
Thy flesh is cold that should be warm with love.
Is't weariness or fear?

IRAD. Press closer, love;
Let thy warm bosom beat away my fear.
What think'st thou, Adah—if our death be nigh,
Is life beyond the grave?

ADAH. Oh, far beyond
Our quick, warm youth the grave. Why should we vex

Our soul for what's beyond that dim beyond?
Here grow the flowers of love to-night, and thus
I pluck them while they bloom.

IRAD. May they be green
In memory long. But sleepless visions here,
Upleaping from the downy present, pace
The cold, dark, echoing future.

ADAH. Morbid fancies.
Recall that nursery rime the children sing:

> The present is a festal bark,
> In which we float o'er waters dark.
> While in the present still we dwell
> The banquet waits and all is well.
> When from the present forth we leap
> We drown in ocean strange and deep.

We'll change our theme. My too forgetful lover
Did never ask me how the moments fled
When he was absent.

IRAD. Let me hear thee tell;
'Twill charm my gloom away.

ADAH. Long every hour
Unshared with thee, and sad. I never knew
How mournful harp and flute, how empty seem
The marble hallway and the echoing stair
Till then. And waking lonely, I have often
Clasped the cold moonlight reaching out for thee,
Pressed my warm bosom on the chilly paving,

And buried in the unresponsive night
The kiss that begged return.

IRAD. No more thou shalt;
Forgive me, love. Were all thy kindred kind?
Were wealth and comfort yours?

ADAH. Unbounded wealth,
All ancient Elmin owned; for Elmin's dead,
And we his heirs.

IRAD. Old age has claimed him then?

ADAH. It might be age, or else an ointed gown
My brother gave him when he lived too long.
I never asked, not I. You shudder, dear;
Is it the damp night wind?

IRAD. No, no, go on.

ADAH. But bitter 'twas to watch the love of others,
Happy while I was loveless; when dim night
Barred out the world's intrusion, to remember
What was and what might be. Eldanah's palace
Lay next to ours. He and his gentle lady
Were glad as once were we.

IRAD. Did not Eldanah,
For so I heard, wed his own daughter?

ADAH. Yes.
Why not? 'Tis common now. They grew together
Like bough and bud. Heaven willed it.

IRAD (*aside*). Did it so?
And what said Noah then, and Noah's God?

ADAH. True love was that. They prized each other dearly;
And when he perished, murdered, none know how,
His daughter pined and died, and sleeps with him.
IRAD. Know'st thou what Noah would have told thee, Adah,
Had he but heard?
ADAH. I half believe I know.
IRAD. He would have said like breath from charnels blew
Through thy dear lips the life that God forbade;
And, quoting God, had told what murder means,
And incest; what dread ripples roll from them,
Which make them crime. He'd ask how you so calmly
Could plaster o'er the stain of blood, and paint
The bridal blush on love's unnatural leer.
ADAH. And would his whilom pupil say it too?
IRAD. I might, but words are breath.
ADAH. Hast thou unlearned
Thy former life? Hadst thou been Elmin's heir,
Poor, one old man between thy hopes and thee,
And he the man of men thy soul did hate,
Here tedious prose and his triumphant sneer,
And there delight and revel and revenge,—
Would Elmin live? Couldst thou not hear the call
Of life and freedom summoning to enjoy?
Already thou hast heard it, at its call
Shed Enoch's blood, as others that of Elmin.

[*Javan starts violently.*]

Or had I been thy daughter, dear as now,
Would'st thou inquire what fountain poured the wave
That cooled thy thirst? Oh, you have learned by heart
Some parrot words; but look on life itself
As these beheld it; glad are Elmin's heirs,
Sweet was Eldanah's love. Wilt thou recant
The creed of years? Canst thou not feel as I?

IRAD. And if I could, God give me strength to keep
That feeling ever dumb!

ADAH. Again you shudder,
As though with fear.

IRAD. Know you the fairy tale
We heard as children, how a mermaid dwelt
With men till she grew human? But one day,
On the blue edge of ocean, while she heard
Its far, unearthly music calling, calling,
The strange old longing of the deep came back,
And drew her downward, half as mermaid longing
For that dim fatherland, and half as mortal
Afraid to drown. And while she felt the waters
Roll deeper, deeper as they claimed her, then
She shuddered too.

ADAH. But yet became a mermaid.

IRAD. No, there the story halted. If I tell it
To son of mine, how shall I end it, how?

[*Unnoticed by them, Javan steals from the arbor, and moves to the other side of the scene, where he meets an attendant.*]

JAVAN. Are you lord Irad's man?
ATTENDANT. I am.
JAVAN. I pray you,
If he shall ask you for a friend called Javan,
Tell him these words of mine: There is a legend
That Lucifer and Michael love each other,
But never meet nor can, so clash and jar
The adverse worlds in which they move; and I
Love Irad ever, but we meet no more.
Goodby. I ride for Noah's mountain.
ATTENDANT. Stay,
My youthful lord. The night is wild; ere dawn
Streams will be freshets and the bridges lost.
You risk your life to go.
JAVAN. I dare not stay.
If fortune aid me I shall live to-morrow.
But if I die, and future ages know
Three sons of Noah only, better that
Than what is here. Forget not thou my message.

[*He moves on and vanishes in the darkness. Enter Tubal-cain and ferryman.*]

TUBAL. The boat is ready. But by my advice
Here shall we bide. I never viewed a sky
Like that to westward. Come but here and look.

Earth seems not earth beneath it. Here are herdsmen,
Who swear the sea is loose, and tidal waves
Abroad on inland plains. Hark! was that thunder,
Or earthquake's rumble?

FERRYMAN. Yonder cloud will burst,
A liquid avalanche. Mark the sapling crouch,
The lake blown into white-caps. Rushing mist
Rides up the peak before us. You are mad
To journey further.

IRAD. Those are mad who stay.
Death gallops fast behind our heels. Away!

(*Exeunt.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

TIME. The small hours of the morning on the same night.

PLACE. A cave part way up Mount Himenay. It is dark, save for the faint gleam of lightning that comes through the entrance. A fearful uproar, though somewhat muffled, is heard from without. A narrow passage winds back into further recesses of the cave; and from here comes the noise of fighting and dying groans.

Enter Misraim from the passage, as if in fear. He hides in a cleft of the rock. Enter a wounded man, who falls with a groan and dies. The noise within grows less, and is wholly lost in the roar of the storm. Then enter from without Irad carrying Adah, Tubal-cain, Jared carried by servants, and several attendants.]

IRAD. Hello!

OTHERS. Hello!

IRAD. A cave. Turn in and halt.

AN ATTENDANT. This rain is more than human strength can bear.
It weighs us down like pushing hands. My god!
How good it seems to rest! Will nothing lift
This blinding bandage of the night?

TUBAL. A torch.
Be careful there; the wind will blow it out.
IRAD. More torches, quick, beneath this boulder's lee.
Hold one above her face; I think she swooned.
Stand over it; the air comes eddying down,
And makes it flare.
AN ATTENDANT. It blows a hurricane.
ANOTHER ATTENDANT. What awful medley of unearthly sounds
Is that keeps rolling from the plain below
Through this blind horror? Oh, for one short glimpse
Of what earth looks like now! The very flashes
Are drowned in rain, one solid mass of blackness.
What's that which happens down below? Who tells?
IRAD. Here, fold my cloak together for her pillow,
And give me yours to wrap her. Bring some wine.
She stirs; her eyes are opening.
ADAH. Where am I?
IRAD. Safe here with me; we're on Mount Himenay.
ADAH. Is the rain ended?
IRAD. No, we're in a cave.
JARED. Hark, Irad, Tubal-cain, do you not hear
Through all the rushing of the storm, and splash
Of driving water? Hark, what sounds are those?

IRAD. You're happy not to know.

TUBAL (*going to the entrance*). More fast and keen
It lightens; now we'll tell what floods are loose.
There comes a flash would light the ocean bed
Through solid brine, and shows—

JARED. What, what? (*No answer.*)
Speak, man.

IRAD (*going to entrance*). All black again. I'll tell you when it comes.

JARED. There, there! That peal was like a crashing world.
You must have seen. (*Pause.*) Speak, Irad, where are you?

IRAD. I'm at thy side; and, as for what I've seen,
Bless Heaven that made thee blind.

JARED. Thy voice is hollow,
Like breath from Horror's chamber. Where's thy hand?
'Tis Irad's hand. Go on.

IRAD. Before I fled
From Noah's tent, they told me, and confirmed,
No matter how, that that dread God of theirs,
Incensed at earth for His neglected shrine,
Prepared to-night to drown the world. I fled;
And with such frail excuse as time allowed
By lies have led you up this mountain peak,
And saved you so. For know that Noah's God
Has kept His word. Already fathoms deep,

And deeper every moment, whirl the floods
O'er Nod and all its people.
JARED. You are mad!
Speak, friends, where are you all? It cannot be.
Oh, for one hour of blessed sight to know
What things and whom to trust!
IRAD. Can you not hear?
Is that dread sound that slowly gathering grows
Aught that you ever heard in life before?
TUBAL. 'Tis true, old man. What forces are at work
Let priests inquire; but all the world is sea.
ADAH. Where art thou, Irad? What alarms you all?
IRAD. Say nothing yet. (*To Adah.*) Rest, dear, we all are safe.
'Tis a wild night, and tragic things, I fear,
Have happened elsewhere; but they touch not us.
ADAH. The hour of love has rung. We'll build our bower
In some dim grotto winding far within.
Hast thou forgot what hallowed night is this,
Made doubly dear by waiting?
IRAD. Nay, but years
Remain for that; postpone all pleasure now.
O Adah, this has been a fearful night;
And dying groans are floating up the sky
As thick as rain.
ADAH. But we, we are alive.

IRAD. I'm sick at heart. Nay, Adah, talk no more
Of love to-night, but tend me as a nurse,
That, lapsing back to childhood, I may lose
All memory of the present.

ADAH. What strange mood
Is this on Niloh's eve? Yet have your will,
For, truth, your eyes are lit with fever's gleam.
Untimely thoughts are there, like stars of night
In wells at noonday. Rest, I'll be thy nurse.

[*Tubal-cain in examining the cave discovers Mizraim.*]

TUBAL. Who's here?

MIZRAIM. Oh, mercy, grant me mercy, sir!

TUBAL. Come here and show your face. A stripling boy.
Why skulk these dainty limbs in such a den
On night as wild as this?

MIZRAIM. But spare my life.

TUBAL. Perhaps I will when thou canst show me cause.
March here between the torches, full in view,
In our mid circle. Throw thy weapon down.
And now be prompt and pointed when I ask.
First then, your name.

MIZRAIM. Mizraim.

TUBAL. Your parents who?

MIZRAIM. None know but Niloh, from whose rites I sprung.

TUBAL. A goodly pedigree, yea, common too
In our abstemious race. How came you here?

MIZRAIM. I marched among the rebel host of late.
And when our army broke and scattered wide
Before Togarmah, here the remnant fled,
A handful merely. Here the others died
This very night, and I was left alone.

TUBAL. How died they all?

MIZRAIM. In quarrel o'er the spoil,
Which rose at feast when heads were hot with wine.
Perhaps you doubt my word; then come with me
Down yonder passage. There you'll find them all
Still palpitating, warm, nay, some in whom
Yet lingers life.

TUBAL. Go on, I follow thee,
My knife against thy neck. Deceive me not.

[*Exeunt Tubal-cain and Mizraim.*]

IRAD. Draw back in darkness.

ADAH. Why unsheathe your blade,
And point your javelin at that line of light?
The dead are harmless.

IRAD. And the living, liars.
Behind me, love; I would not for the world
Have ill betide thee.

ADAH. Thou art brave and strong;

And Tubal-cain is of the giants old.
Why need we fear?

IRAD. I fear not for myself.
God bless thee, Adah. Ne'er till danger's hour
Knew I how dear I held thee. Here they come.

[*Re-enter Tubal-cain and Mizraim.*]

TUBAL. Well, such is human folly. There they lie
Amid the wealth they died for, piled like logs
In rotten woodlands, every fool in turn
A murderer and a victim.

JARED. All are dead?

TUBAL. Some dead, some dying, all past mischief now.

IRAD. Methought I heard them groan. 'Twere mercy's part
To ease their dying hours.

TUBAL. Nay, let them lie;
They're nought to us. Now, sir, come here again.
I fought with those before Togarmah's fort,
Your adversary there. What blight came down
To shrivel up your fine array so fast?
We looked defeat in the face; and, presto! change!
Our dread snow-man had melted.

MIZRAIM. Those rich valleys
Were too indulgent for a soldier's life.
And drinking deep all joys of nature there,
We lost our pith and edge; found pleasure soft,

Ambition hard and foolish; passed the word
From ear to ear, till our whole host became
A martial farce, a flimsy, painted cloth,
Which war's first rumor blew to tatters.

TUBAL. So.
A set of puny boys, whom pleasure melts
Like ice in August. We old veterans, too,
We had our joys; but we could stand the pace.
Yet, half our army being young like you,
Had you but charged that night instead of fleeing,
You had found us rotten ramparts. Such is life.
Well, sit you there. We'll give you orders later.

IRAD. Is this the nation of the giants, Nod,
Whose armies, like colliding thunder-clouds,
Jarred earth in meeting? Have we fallen to this?

TUBAL. Oh, we have warriors yet can whack a helmet,
Old hoary-heads; but these green boys are fog.
Just sixty years ago that very field
Saw such a shocking where our armies clashed
As would have stunned them with its noise alone.

[*Enter from without Iban and several revelers.*]

IBAN. If ye be men whom e'er compunction touched,
Beauty, or love of art, receive us kindly.
I am the poet Iban, these my friends,
Shipwrecked but now against this mountain's base,

Half dead from bruising rock and pounding wave,
And rain that weighs like lead.

IRAD. 'Tis he himself.
Welcome, old friend, familiar faces here
You see, and kindred bosoms.

IBAN. Praise the gods!
What, Irad, Tubal-cain, can this be true?
The muses guard their own.

TUBAL. Sit down, sit down.
You're white and pant like deer.

IBAN. Have ye a fire?
I've ocean dripping from my back; and all
The clouds of heaven have soaked me.

IRAD. Nought but torches.

MIZRAIM. So please you, sir, within the further cave
Is fuel plenty. Only give the word,
This crevice was our fireplace.

IRAD. Quickly then.

[*Mizraim brings out fuel from within and starts a fire.*]

IBAN. What boy is that?

IRAD. Last of a bandit gang;
The rest have killed each other.

IBAN. What's his future?
Do you adopt him?

IRAD. 'Twas but now we found him.

TUBAL. Nay, no adopting waif and stranger here
To load us down. We'll use his wits to-night,
To-morrow end him.
JARED. Ay, the simplest way.
We've servants all we need.
IRAD. Now God forbid!
Is he not human, feeling joy and grief
To which our natures echo, kindred man?
TUBAL. Why, yes, he has a heart, a pair of lungs,
Like us or wolves or jackals. What of that?
He'll profit nought to me; if you enjoy him,
Why, keep him then.
JARED. 'Twill be another mouth.
Why stint our guests and us for God knows who?
IRAD. Is there no joy in grateful eyes, no pang
In dying groans, when dreams identify
Our lives with those we mold?
TUBAL. Why should there be?
This comes from Noah, sounds like old wives' tales
Of amputated stumps and aching limbs.
IBAN. Ay, Noah's folly. Sweeter far is love
When focused warm, intense in narrow ring,
Than thus diffused.
TUBAL. "Glad homes," the proverb says,
"Are lined with love and moated round with blood."
IBAN. Friend, favorite, mistress, these are magic words;

Outside,—what matters? Yet this boy is fair;
And beauty is too rare and hardly won
For reckless usage. Let us keep him still.

JARED. Ay, now you mention it, his step is light,
And soft his voice as woman's. Fair, you say.
Would I could see him.

TUBAL. Ah, our reverend friend
Begins to feel the spell of Niloh's mount.

JARED. Come hither, lad. (*Mizraim approaches.*) Thou'rt comely, I am told.
The only eyes which blindness has are these,
That yet would view thy beauty. (*Feels his face.*)
Every line
Like chiseled marble; and this healthy warmth
Declares the blush of youth. I like thee well.
What say'st thou, lad? Wilt thou be friends with me,
The solace of my age, as Bahran's boy
Was joy to him?

MIZRAIM (*with a quick glance around*). Yea, sir, if so you will.

IRAD. Sir, I implore you, let this matter wait.
In hourly danger still, no time have we
For aught but vigilance to save our lives.
Our safety's first of all.

TUBAL. The lad is right.
All things in proper time. Hear reason, man.
And you, gay youngster, shall be butler here,
For your dead band had cellars. Come with me.

[*During the following dialogue between Irad and Iban, Mizraim and the attendants, under the direction of Tubal-cain, bring in from the further cavern an extemporized banquet table, and load it with all the paraphernalia belonging to a splendid feast.*]

IBAN (*aside to Irad*). A sickening offer, dotage wooing fear,
And profanation of that tender tie
For which poor Bahran died.

IRAD (*aside to Iban*). The scene fits well
With that outside. If eyes above look down
What thoughts must be in heaven.

IBAN. Yea, the gods
Will smile behind the scenes. Yet, after all,
So dear the hours of youth and young delight,
Who'd blame the old, though loth to let them go?

IRAD. How shall I judge a man who callous thus,
Yea, o'er the deathbed of his fatherland,
Affronts both God and nature's whispering law?
And this but sample of a lifetime gone,
As well I know.
Yet not through blood alone but deeper ties
He bids me pause in judgment. That gray beard
Has wagged above my boyhood's play, and drooped
Tear-drenched o'er beds of fever. Hours I've sat
Perched on his knee, while we like statesmen weighed

The worth of hobby-horses, balls, and drums,
Tin catapults and bastions. Then in youth
My exploits made him weep with joy; he'd cheer me
Did I compete for prize in dance or song,
And hang the tiger's pelt with golden claws
Because his boy had killed it. Gracious heaven!
When thus the flower and stinking weed entwine,
Which shall we count the man?

IBAN. You're too severe.
View human follies close with candid eye,
Not thus through Noah's twisted lens, you'll find
The sin that plucks an apple through a fence
Is venial, ay, and universal too.
The strife 'twixt law and longing sweetens life,
And there romance is born.

IRAD. So once thought I.
I had begun to reason otherwise.

IBAN. This mystery life is like a lovely girl,
Who cries, "You shall not," when she hopes you will,
Rewards the bold transgressor well, and chills
Sheep-eyed Obedience with her frosty praise.
And toward her genial warmth I stretch my hands,
As toward this welcome flame.

TUBAL. Now, gentle friends,
Our neighbors having piled our board, and then
By opportune demise removed themselves,
We'll banquet even here.

IRAD. What! here a feast!

IBAN. The gods be praised! ne'er needed like to-night.
Here's food to cheer the faint, and kindly wine
To laugh our horrors down.
TUBAL. Be seated all.
THE REVELERS. On Niloh's mount the god provides his own.
TUBAL. One place is vacant.
IBAN. Why does Irad wait?
IRAD. Go on nor notice me; I'm not in mood
For revelry to-night.
TUBAL. Nay, come, lad, come.
What sullen devil lurks in you of late?
IBAN. Your empty place will haunt us, like the chair
In Bahran's lay. Come, you look dark as men
Who weigh some tragic matter pro and con.
The sadder earth, the more we need what cheers.
Sit down and laugh with us.
IRAD. I'm not in mood.
ADAH. Art thou in mood to please a lady's wish,
And one to whom thou owest grace as well
For cold refusal past? Shall I alone
Have emptiness for partner? Noble sir,
I do entreat thy company at feast.
IRAD. Hast thou forgot what night it is?
ADAH. Nay, nay,
'Tis thou forgettest; this is Niloh's night.
Be earth undone; but let our rosy ring

Be pleasure's magic circle, friendship's, love's;
On that enchanted ground no noxious thing
Intrude, or painful thought. Two talismans
I offer thee, of power to make this den
Appear a palace, we the king and queen.
The one this cup contains; perchance my lip
Might hold the other.

IRAD. How thou gildest o'er
What seemed corruption. Which the trulier sees,
The eye bewitched by Noah or by thee?

ADAH. Which one, indeed? Be thou impartial judge.
And if thou deem'st my magic more than his,
Be pleased to come with me.

IRAD. Ah, well, I yield.
Thy witchery's more, be wisdom where it will.

IBAN. A toast, a toast! the victor comes and brings
Her captive train behind.

ALL. A toast, a toast!

IBAN. Pour, servant, pour. The night may rave without;
What care we now how leap and howl beneath
The baffled hounds of ocean?

REVELERS. Doubly sweet
Is safety after danger.

IBAN. Ay, it is.
This warms the blood. I shudder when I think,
Had I remained below, what cold blue hand

Had drawn my morning curtains, and what face
Peered in on mine.

IRAD. Who brought you safely here?

IBAN. A power that willed not Cain should cease to be.

The lure of ocean drew us. Three whole days
We sailed the main, while like a sounding shell
Our vessel rang with music. Then arose
This awful storm that hurled the sea on land,
And us therewith, swept o'er the drowned domain,
The billows' plaything. Last on rocks below,
Once inland cliff but now the ocean's edge,
We dashed and shattered. Yet such grace was ours
From god in love with art, or pitying muse,
Entire our band were saved, though all the rest,
Page, woman, slave, and brawny seaman, drowned.

IRAD. Not one of all your number gone?

IBAN. Not one,
Though ne'er alive through such a boiling foam,
Methinks, came man before.

IRAD. A priest would deem
Some special providence of gods indeed
Had held you worthy saving.

IBAN. Yea, for we,
Though humble lamps, preserved the ancient flame
That ocean else had quenched.

IRAD. I drink to thee,
Whom powers inscrutable have chosen thus
Ambassador from former worlds to new.

Drink deep; I'll drink with thee, till in the cup
We find thy message for the men unborn.

FIRST REVELER. Peace, peace, ye yelping clouds.
Have we no harp
Of power to drown their discord?

SECOND REVELER. Sheathe your fires,
Ye hunters of the night; the game is flown.

THIRD REVELER. Let ocean bellow, while the mountain laughs,
And makes its rage a foot-bath.

IRAD (*aside*). Yet one sound
Ye cannot hush nor mock, the kindred cry,
Now shrill as if beneath the murderer's blow,
Now myriad-voiced in ocean. Fill the bowl.
These others drink and hear it not. Drink thou.
For ne'er till abstinence unbraced thine ear
Heard'st thou or heeded.

ADAH. Fearful must have been
The scenes you witnessed, Iban, sailing thus
O'er what was happening yonder.

IBAN. Fearful, strange.
I know not whether theme of future verse,
Or memory dread to paralyze all song
In me forever. Dim and foggy broke
That fatal morning. Sultry heaven sucked
The moisture of the deep in rolling mist,
That steamed aloft unceasing, wall on wall,
To one gray roof. There all day long we rowed
Through cloudy corridors, down whispering aisles,

Whose waters murmured low, like multitudes
When hushed in some great awe. But close on night
Wind, mild at first but freshening keen and fast,
And shouldering Titan-like the clouds along,
Went blowing inland. Dark the world became;
And sounds mysterious under ocean ran,
Like noise of crunching rocks or settling walls
When props are knocked away. Then heaving deep,
As if its bed were tilted up, while sank
The land in equal scale, whate'er the cause,
The mighty stream rolled inland. Earth beneath
Convulsive groaning heaved the liquid hills,
That far subsiding rolled. O'erhead was storm,
Black cloud and lightning flash, a roof of night,
Whose rafters all were fire; while yet the rain
Hung pendulous, nor fell. Now on our lee
Loomed up the halls of Cain, like rocks awash,
Beneath that awful gleam. The crawling brine
Had filled their streets; and waves like battering-rams
Demolished home and fane. On beetling roofs,
Yet stedfast, jutting dark against the fire,
Moved frantic forms, whose cry methought I heard
Through stormy miles between. Then fell the rain
In tumbling rivers, making earth and sky
One formless blot.

ADAH. Ah, may my sleep to-night

Be free of dreams; for if a vision came
What pictures might it draw.

IBAN. These eyes could weep
A second flood for what the first destroyed.
I saw the marble domes a thousand years
Had built with toil of thousands, hewing flat
Whole mountains for the stone, I saw them racked
From their foundations; arch and aqueduct,
The marvels of all time, in frothy foam
Made scaffolding for coral. Park and lawn,
The walks we loved, far rides along the hills,
Wide stretch of landscape flecked with countless homes,—
All now are nothing.

IRAD. Just beyond the town
A villa lay where I was born and reared.
I knew its every acre, every curve
Of slope or river; 'twas my world, 'twas home.
Such ties the Deluge broke.

A REVELER. Fill high the bowl,
Else Goodman Gloom may tweak our nose. Drink deep;
Old Lady Care would edge into our midst;
We'll send her packing.

IBAN. Ay, you're right, you're right.
Enjoy the fire that burns; the fire that's cold
Will ne'er inspire the young nor warm the old.

TUBAL. The night is done. Let now the cup of sleep,

Infused with drowsy lotus, walk its round.
A health to dreamland, friends.

ALL. A health to dreamland.

ADAH. On shores afar the peaceful waters lap.
And winds at play among the rustling boughs
Are calling for their playmates.

IRAD. Wait, we come.
Thy hair is soft, beloved, and thy breath
Like April meadows. Fair is earth indeed.
Great mother Life, why should thy children lack?
Sweet hall of dreams, receive the wanderer back.

[*They all fall into drowsy attitudes, and nothing is heard but the uproar of the storm outside. A long time elapses. Then Irad awakes while the others remain asleep, and with the gleam of unnatural excitement still in his eyes goes to the mouth of the cave.*]

IRAD. Art thou there, Enoch, wandering in the night?
Let him who wishes life be wise, nor tempt
The sons of Cain. Thou pay'st thy folly's fee.
And thou dark speck beneath the lightning's gleam,
If thou be what I think thee, journey on
To thy dull destiny. Not Seth alone,
Cain also shall survive, and I with Cain;
And life with us, not flaccid life and lean,
But such as through the inmost vein of being
Mines out the treasure hid. Still vext pursue

A phantom future, lay foundation walls;
We'll clasp the present, feast in halls that are.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

Scene I.

Time. A number of days later.

Place. A small temple to Niloh on the topmost point of Mount Himenay. The scene is a square colonnade. At the back it is open and gives a view of the storm outside and the waste of waters, which now are not far below the top of the mountain. Far off appears a half submerged rock which was once the summit of a high mountain peak. In the foreground are rugs, couches, and all the furnishings of luxury. The scene begins in the dim gray twilight of daytime, which darkens into pitch-black night at the end.

[*Enter the Antediluvians as if from banquet.*]

Iban. Let heaven roar and rain! Who cares?
Its flashes
Are festal lamps to us, its thunder music.
Let the wet patter; let the wind it drenches
Blow cool our fevered cheek.

Tubal. Climb, ocean, climb.
Your waves besiege a fort provisioned well.
One drop of life-infusing wine can conquer
All your damp horrors.

IBAN. Ocean's but a stage,
Postprandial theater, our panorama.
Ring up the scudding mist with thunder, gods;
And we'll enjoy the tableau.

TUBAL. Reverend Noah,
Afloat there in the storm, eats moldy cheese,
Drinks the flat, tepid rain, and lies in straw
Where cattle house. Who'd share his cruise with him—
Who that can live with us on dainty fare,
Drink foaming vintage, lie on purple couches,
Feel like the gods warm blood and breathing fragrance?

IBAN. Ay, let the world go under! What care we
In joy's asylum?

ADAH. Only all these garlands
Are withered ones; I miss the living wreaths.
The rich old earth is bankrupt now of blossom.
And I so prized them all, the rose and lily,
Proud garden queen and mistress of the meadow.
When buds the earth again? When shall we cull
Flowers on the hills?

IRAD. Ask Him who sent the Deluge.
If still He rule the deep, He knows. But often
A crushing terror grips my heart that He,
Stunned by this endless rush and roar, and deafened
By the eternal lashing of the storm,

Has dropped the reins of power; and the wild
waters,
Like horses masterless, gallop on forever.
ADAH. A fairer dream was mine. Methought
the sun
Beamed as of old; and earth to meet him slipped
Her robe of waters from her like a bride.
His lip was warm on peak and hill, that swelled
Like breasts of love, and warm his arms of light
Around the blushing planet. From their union
Grew life anew. Beneath the mantling sea-weed,
Like arbutus through withered leaves of March,
Peeped all the flowers of spring. The parting
ripple
Went lingering from the moistened hills, that
gleamed
Like meadows after rain.
IRAD. I am a churl
To shatter dream so fair; but we must arm
Our hearts beforehand for the hard, stern truth.
For when the Flood goes down, if e'er it do,
The earth will be no bride but one great corpse;
And that grim desolation, huge and haunting,
Will hang persistent on the eye, and crush
The soul within us,—valleys black with slime,
Gaunt, ribbèd hills, the skeleton of a world,
And drifted silt, through which the wrecks dis-
mantled
Of the great past will point like dead men's fingers.

There too we'll find the death of ocean piled
High on dry land, strange corpses of the abyss,
Tremendous, whale and kraken where they died;
Who knows? perhaps leviathan himself
Stretched in portentous bulk along some hill,
Athwart the sunset like an ominous cloud.
And we must live, one lonely colony,
In alien scenes of death, till gradual time
Enshroud them deep in herbage. I am cruel,
But 'tis the surgeon's hand.

TUBAL. This comes of fasting,
Fasting and lack of wine, this gloomy mood.
You have not drunk to-day. Here, boy, but taste.
Here's alchemy transmuting woe to bliss,
And fool to sage.

IRAD. We all have drunk too deep
Of that charmed cup; would I might never taste it
In life again.

IBAN. Oh, 'tis the magic glass
Through which all time grows rosy, life's quintessence,
Romance and beauty. Could you live without it
One fleeting moon, to drink from jet and puddle
Insipid, bare existence?

TUBAL. He has tried it,
With solemn oath abjured the god of wine
For three whole days, and on the fourth returned
With thrice threefold devotion.

IRAD. What we could do

I know not well; but what we must I know.
Have you e'er thought what hardship we must bear
When all these vaults are drained? Left empty-handed
On the denuded hills, we must strip off
The soft traditions of a hundred years,
And delve like Eve and Adam.

ADAH. Nay, but surely
We'll be the lords of earth.

IRAD. And who our servants?
Alas, dear head, will miles of barren mud
Yield thee one dainty mouthful? Will the winds
O'er continents all empty blow together
A home for thee? When time has worn away
This gorgeous robe, think you its like will grow
On wayside brambles? Iban and myself
Must till old earth for bread; and thou, sweet love,
Even if we spare thee toil, must yet endure
With us privation.

IBAN. Ah, you're like the plague!
Your mood's infectious; and my sickening fancy
Already weaves the picture, sordid want
With horror mixed, where hunger drives us on
Through that great cemetery once a world.
Here march we swart and haggard; tired at night
Lop trees for shelter, bed on clammy moss;
Drive down our pick on buried thrones of kings,
Cheap now as limestone; gnaw our blackened crust
O'er stones that jut from halls of former feast;

Turn with irreverent blow the bygone bones
That once had slept with us; and when the thought
Of death and what's beyond has chilled our blood,
Read on some kinsman's enigmatic skull,
"I know, but tell not." Never! drink and revel
While revel lasts; and after that we'll sleep.

IRAD. So say you now; but would you quench so lightly
That lamp of thought that none can reillume,
Dreams even to drudges known, and whispering hope
Intangible and sweet o'er weary pillows,—
Leave this, and sleep forever, none know how,
With nothingness or nightmares? What had Adam
And our first mother more than we to charm them?
We'll dig as they did, and perhaps like them
Be root of some great nation.

TUBAL. Ah, I see you
In vision, youngster, practice what you preach.
Old Adam—pshaw! his was a bovine race,
That grazed, and suckled young, and lived for others.
We're tigers, boy. On others for ourselves
We've learned to live, grown sleek and terrible
By that warm diet. Can we now, so late,
Unlearn the lesson of the centuries? No.
We'll live the tiger's life, and die his death
When our fat oxen fail.

IRAD. The very tiger

Would chew the grass and live, if his grim maw
Could make it food.

TUBAL. Ay, but it cannot feed him;
Nor can we live and drudge. The pastoral age
Went long ago. Oh, I am old, I saw it.
They knew no better; ignorance like dew
Made life a morning fresh. The dew is dried.
They built the world and we enjoyed it well.
Why should we build like fools for others? No!
When the long banquet's done, out lights! to bed!
We've had our hour and used it.

IBAN. Ay, our fathers
Went drudging on, and lived because they lived,
Ne'er asking why. We've learned to think, to know
What a poor piebald robe of curse and blessing
Is life at best; at worst a poison tunic,
Which wisdom spurns.

IRAD. Had God not sent the Deluge
What hand had built for future years, and saved
Wisdom and health for them, while we were wasting
The hoard our fathers piled? Those mighty muscles,
That have withstood unwrecked a lifetime's waste,
Debauchery and soft joy; these brains of ours,
In which the genius of a maddening world
Flares up before it dies,—these are the savings
Of the long, healthy years before we came.
What body, mind, and soul were we bequeathing
To future nations?

IBAN. Would you have the world
Forever in the same prosaic furrow
Crawl on in stingy leanness? Rather think
Our fathers were the root, and we the flower,
The perfect blossom. 'Twas for us they sucked
The juice of earth; and, had we never bloomed,
They too were vain. The dream of what we are
Cheered on those plodding sires; and what we were
From monolith and parchment shall inspire
The years to be. We are a flame that o'er
The sordid hills of time interprets life
As something splendid.

FIRST REVELER. Is not that the theme
Of your new drama?

IBAN. Surely.

ADAH. Oh, the drama!
We have not heard it; you must read it, Iban.

SECOND REVELER. No, no! we'll act it.

FIRST REVELER. Act it; that is better.

ADAH. What is the plot?

IBAN. The Power that rules the world,
Arraigned in court for drowning man, is brought
Before old Time as judge. The Spirit of Beauty
Is his accuser; he defends himself.
The verdict ends the play. 'Tis a mere fragment,
Thrown off at random.

FIRST REVELER. Iban shall be accuser,
Old Tubal-cain, throned here in state, be Time,
And I the offending Power. We know our lines.

Now for the play.

IBAN. The scene's the hall of Time.

TUBAL-CAIN (*as Time*).

We fill our throne of judgment. Who appear
In this great court of last appeal, to hear
The sentence of old Time?

IBAN (*as the Spirit of Beauty*).

So deep a wrong
As never sons of Beauty yet nor Song
Have known I bring. That Power which from the void
The world created and the world destroyed
I here accuse, that his own child he slew,
The earth which at his knee in beauty grew;
And heaped the scum of waves and drifted silt
O'er what my hand and thine, old Time, had built.

TUBAL-CAIN (*as Time*).

A fearful charge; what answer, Lord of Spheres,
Mak'st thou before the dread and searching years?

FIRST REVELER (*as the Power of the World, and mimicking the manner of Noah*).

All measures in vain
Would the measureless span;
And what word shall explain
The eternal to man,

In what dim recesses
The mystery lurks
That curses and blesses
And endlessly works?
When the world that was doomed
Was engulfed in the wave,
Then my wrath but resumed
What my clemency gave.
And the reasons that stirred me,
The will that inflamed,
Know those only who heard me,
When nature was framed.
O'er a glory immoral,
A beauty profane,
Now branches the coral
And darkens the main.

TUBAL-CAIN (*as Time*).

Hast thou no more? Speak on, accuser.

IBAN (*as the Spirit of Beauty*).

Lo,
The saddest witness court did ever know
I bring thee here, and call to life again
The spirit of that city built by Cain.
Sea-weed and wreckage line her marble floors;
Night keeps the temple now where none adores;
For thrones imperial whale and serpent vie;
And dead within her arms her children lie.

There infants are who scarce began to bloom,
And babes unborn that died within the womb,
The little hand that just had learned to reach
The mother's face, the gaze that longed for speech.
What law of God or nature ever broke
The helpless arm, the lip that never spoke?
There lie, cut off untimely, girl and boy,
Whose only fault was that they dared enjoy
What Heaven and nature gave. And here the seas
Rolled dark o'er those who drew from breathing keys
Delight unknown before, from wire or pipe,
Or metal's clang; and those, when time was ripe,
Who mirrored life on canvas, wall and frieze;
And bards divine, who sang of art and ease,
Delight and dream and life without alloy;
And learnèd men, who found the cup of joy
In the dark mine of life, and gave the power
To taste without repentance' answering hour.
And mighty men of old renown are there,
Whose like come nevermore, whose strength could tear
The lion's jaws. Unworn a lifetime long
They drank the exhaustless rapture of the strong,
Warred, loved, and reveled; and their torch burnt red,
Yet unconsumed. Lo, judge, for all these dead
I make appeal. The light is quenched that none
Can reillume, the day of glory done,

The life that was, the life that none restore,
The life that earth shall equal nevermore.

TUBAL-CAIN (*as Time*).

Hark to the judgment of old Time. Thou Power
That hast consumed thy children, from this hour
Resign thy throne, nor hope to fill it more
Till thou the glory thou hast quenched restore.
And, final act of thy now forfeit might,
Quell thou the storm, rekindle heaven's light,
Roll back the waves, and call the earth to bloom.

FIRST REVELER (*as Power of the World*).

Lo, here submissive I accept my doom.
Even as I speak rain, wind, and cloud have ceased;
The floods withdraw, the morning walks the east.
And what thou hast not asked, repentant now
I will perform, and seal it with a vow.
The sad survivors of the world that's gone
I'll love and cherish as the doe its fawn.
Still as his father did the son shall do;
And the old world be born in them anew.

IBAN. So ends the play.
ADAH. And well deserves our thanks.
Irad, is that not so? Why do you stare
So fixedly at the storm? No word of praise
For what has charmed us?

IRAD. Oh, 'twas doubtless well.
Only the Power outside there in the rain
Seemed somewhat different from your mimic one.

[*He walks to the edge of the colonnade and holds up his hands into the storm that drives over him. At the same time there comes an unusually loud peal of thunder.*]

Here's His cold message; there you hear His voice
Proclaim His will to man. Shall you and I,
Think you, by his decree renew on earth
The life we used to live? And that dark water,
Pitted and wrinkled by the spouting floods
Of yet augmenting anger, is the seal
Of His approval on our past and future.

ADAH. You are unwell.

IRAD. Oh, yes, I am unwell,
Sick of a thing they call the curse of God.
You too are sick and know it not, all, all.
But the physician's coming.

ADAH (*to others*). Pray you, leave us.

[*Exeunt all except Adah and Irad.*]

ADAH. Thou art alone with me. Come, rest thy head
Upon my bosom, let me lull thy fever.
Thy forehead burns.

IRAD. Then fold thy kerchief there.

Not sick in blood am I but sick of heart,
And need no medicine but companionship.
ADAH. Liked you not Iban's play?
IRAD. 'Twas mockery, mockery.
He played a wedding march; and through the window
I saw the bride's white skull.
ADAH. You will go mad
If thus you watch that water. Gone is Nod,
The beautiful city of our childhood's gone;
But we, we live; and in the city of love
We'll still be happy.
IRAD. Oh, but shall we be?
Or is our love a transitory thing,
Far from life's root, one petal of that flower
Which God mowed down in mercy ere it withered?
On thy soft forehead burns no brand of Cain,
No saint's more fair. Had we grown old in Nod,
And God ne'er sent the Deluge, could we two
Have kept the genial torch of love alight
When blood and bone were cold? What think you, Adah?
Weak, old, and wrinkled, had we still been dear
Each to the other?
ADAH. What persistent wind
Thus blows your mind on rocks of wretchedness?
We're young; if now we dream of being old,
When shall we have our youth?
IRAD. Is love a lamp

To burn on sense and fade when sense is gone?
If so, we'll light it and inhale its breath
Now while we may. But there's another love,
Ne'er found in life yet seeming meant to live,
That comes in dreams and haunts my waking hours.
In that the passing glow of youth became
A furnace fire, wherein the soul was forged
To beauty's image; and the heat grew cold,
But left the soul it forged still beautiful.
And oft I've dreamed one woman dwelt with me
In a small cottage out among the trees
As brother might with sister, only closer,
In sweeter union, weaving soul in soul;
Have sat long nights beside her hand in hand,
In lonely chambers, where no stifling air
With incense loaded came, but meadows breathed
Through open windows. For our torch the moon
Shone pure and tranquil. In that hour we might
Have grown unbodied spirits, mixing still
In incorporeal winds, and still have loved.
Our drink was all the brook; and calm within
Flowed strength that never from the wine-cup welled.
We toiled, accomplished, builded, felt in little
What must have been the great Creator's joy.
And the grave hills looked down, and placid heaven
Smiled kindly at us. Slowly we grew old
Among our children, yet the moving years
But drew us closer. Is all this a dream?

Or can we live so, Adah, you and I?

ADAH. Nay, you are feverish; let the future go;
For none can tell what power or wish were ours
On ways untried, and woman least of all.
Where thou art not is desert; where thou art
I clasp thy youth, and none can wrest it from me.
Let the great clock tick on; we'll stuff our ears
And never hear it.

IRAD. But the cry of children,
Our own, will come. What life shall they be taught?

ADAH. What else than that of time's old race, the blood
Of Cain and Irad?

IRAD. Shall our little daughter
Grow up to worship Niloh? And our boy
Learn life as I did?

ADAH. Would you have him other
Than what you are, the manliest son of Cain?
What in your nature vexes you?

IRAD. O Adah,
There's something in my nature killing me.
Why turned my fancy thus to rural life,
Untainted love and labor's healthy vigil?
'Twas as the traveler, dying parched in deserts,
Might dream cool water near, and gulp the sand
In helpless longing. Night and day there comes
The vision of a life I cannot live,
Such as God meant for man, and which my fathers

Bartered for this ere I was born. I said,
Calm peace shall drive out anger; in an hour
I was a murderer. Temperance, then I said,
Shall spread my table; four short days had passed,
And wine and lotus claimed me. Yet, I cried,
My love for woman shall be pure as dew.
But oh! though pure and fair my love for thee,
And rooted deep in all that's noblest here,
Yet ever on that rose of beauty crawls
The loathsome worm that Niloh's worship spawned.
Nor can I pluck it from my brain.

ADAH. Be calm.
You see the world through black delirium's glass,
Which colors all you do. Who'd have a man
Meek as a peasant, dieting like children,
Loving he knows not what? The thing that frights you
Is life as all do live. You're not yourself.
Rest and forget.

IRAD. Oh, these are on the surface,
Mere ripples from within. But deeper, deeper
Goes the dread thing I have not words to tell.
'Tis my whole view of life. Ambition, friendship,
Love, pleasure, worship, God, and hope, and beauty,
And good and evil,—all these things on me,
Like some fair hillside glassed in turbid waters,
Come fouled and darkened. I am like a man
Whose limbs the surgeon lopped but yesterday.
Still in his brain the restless nerves reach out

To clasp, to move, and nothing there responds.
So day and night my spirit reaches out
To be the man God meant me; but the power
To clasp that dream my fathers rent and severed
Ere I drew breath.

ADAH. What would you do or be
That you cannot? Are you not envied heir
Of what the centuries gathered, fair and strong,
A lord of men?

IRAD. Oh, yes, a blessed heir.
Our grandsires made the torch, our fathers burnt it;
'Tis at the socket now.

ADAH. Have you not friends
To make you cheer?

IRAD. Yes, but that angry ocean
Brings such a loneliness as none dispel.
There speaks the wrath of God, and night and day
Frowns in on me.

ADAH. Let the dark despot frown.
We'll scorn His tyranny.

IRAD. Were He a tyrant
Then I could bear, retorting scorn with scorn.
But wiser, deeper, tenderer than the love
Of man is His; and while He frowns on me,
He smiles on others, beautiful beyond words.
Oh, lonely, lonely past all speech to feel
The anger of the good! I am the blot

On His fair world, the gnarl upon the bough,
Which He must pare away.

ADAH. This road is madness.
You must not, shall not brood on things like these.
Hark, and I'll sing thy restless heart to sleep
With an old tune we love.

SONG

What calls from the distance
  And beckons us on?
'Tis the joy of existence
  Ere morning be gone.
The blossoms are swelling,
  The dawn's in the east;
And the soul in its dwelling
  Rejoices at feast.
While to harmony moving
  All blessings unite,
The loved and the loving
  Drink deep of delight.
The gods have grown heedless,
  They all are so old.
Oh, why, when 'tis needless,
  Should pleasure be cold?

IRAD. I thank thee, dear.
And now thou'rt weary; leave me here a little.
I'd be alone and silent.

ADAH. Dare I trust thee
To thy dark thoughts alone?
IRAD. They're fleeing fast,
Chased by thy gentle touch. Goodby, sweet love.
ADAH. But stay not long alone, for I shall miss thee.

[*Exit Adah.*]

IRAD (*alone*). The night grows dense within and wild without.
The torches are burnt low, and in their sockets
Flicker and fade. There, the wild gust has quenched them.
Come, Darkness, and shake hands; for I and thou
Are of the shadowy things that must make room
When God brings in His morning.

[*Walks to the edge and looks at the water.*]

Rising still.
Where on these waters dark is Noah now?
Two empty places in his ark there are,
Mine and my victim's. What dark spot is that
Which floats against the rock and hangs there? Strange,
It looks a floating coffin. Something white
Peeps out beneath the lightning. 'Tis a skull.
Thou dreadful herald from the realms untrod,
Why knock'st thou here? Nay, rather, wandering waif,

What hospitality dost thou need more?
Does lack of burial haunt thee? Has that brought thee
Thus battering at my gate? Wait, then, I come.

[*He descends to the water, and soon returns with a human skull in his hand.*]

Sit there, ambassador. I'd talk with thee.
I'll seek thy country shortly, and I'd know
Its customs, folk, and language. You live longer
Than we do here; pray, does the time hang heavy?
Do the dead know each other? Can young lovers
Still find each other lovely? Does God come there
To smile on these and frown at those? No answer?
Oh, you're a diplomat; you've learned out there
To hold your tongue. Nay, you're but bones and offal.
What answer should the brain in my warm skull
Expect of this dry pod? Thou'rt but the husk
Of some abortive grain which winds have blown
From God's great threshing-floor. Poor, kindred thing,
Cast on the dump-heap of the world, while God
Finds pleasure elsewhere! Yet he did not die
Beneath the Deluge; see, these bones were cracked
By club or staff. What Cainite son of Cain
Took thee for Abel? Half methinks I know
The face that once you lined. Did Noah send thee
Afloat to me? Or has the Flood scooped up

Thy new-dug grave, that thou art come to stare
At my sick conscience thus? Preach on, preach on!
I know thy text, admit its truth; and yet
Thou might'st have mercy. Even in death persistent!
Or hast thou come to tell me that those eyes
Have seen the Deluge, as thou swor'st they should,
And I did swear they should not? Get thee gone!
Wert thou alive again I'd kill thee still!

[*He strikes the skull, which rolls along the floor. Then after a pause he speaks.*]

And yet the will to murder!

[*From the next room comes an outburst of drunken revelry.*]

Oh, great Heaven,
What things are we that we have lived so long?
Come, Death, beneath thy mantel cover up
The horrid glass that shows us what we are.
Blow wind, and tumble rain, and ocean swell!
Why are you tardy? Haste your cleansing work.
Wipe us from that creation which we blot!
Come, bury us, bury us from the face of God
Under your waters forever and forever!

CURTAIN.

Scene II.

Time. Four or five days later.

Place. The same as in the last scene. The storm, however, has ceased, and the moon shines occasionally through the clouds.

[*Enter Iban and Tubal-cain.*]

Iban. The rain has paused; is ocean rising yet?
Tubal. No, not two fathom down beneath our feet
The waves have halted. Through the grated cloud
There glints the moon at last.
Iban. And hope with her
Returns at length to tell a kindlier future
Than this cold, fishy death we feared.
Tubal. Even so.
The balance turns. Life may have something yet
For all of us.
Iban. No, not for all; for one
That cup is emptied.
Tubal. Adah?
Iban. She is dying.
Tubal. But three days ill, and all to end to-night.
The race of men grow frail, young generations
That wither in the bud. The hoary fathers

Who drowned of late o'ertopped their dwindling sons.
The mighty lived; but might was born no more,
Nor length of days. Could wind as light as this
Detach a fruit unripened?

IBAN. Fate is jealous
Of all that's fair. The things that charmed our life
He filches one by one.

[*Exeunt Iban and Tubal-cain. Enter Irad bearing Adah.*]

IRAD. Here rest thee where the moon's rekindling beam
May light thy brow.

ADAH. 'Tis gone.

IRAD. 'Twill come again.
There exiled life returns to all mankind;
Canst thou not share it?

ADAH. Oh, the wish to live
Burns up anew, but not the power. All's done,
The glamour and the glory, warmth and beat
Of life's glad, transient dream. I pant for breath.
Ah, me!

IRAD. Here rest thy head. Thou'rt better now?
There gleams the moon again, as when it lighted
Our loves of old.

ADAH. But not the same; its ray
Is cold, that once was warm.

IRAD. The same bright key
Is this which once unlocked our golden hours.
ADAH. The golden hours are gone. Ah, who can tell
Behind the door that key unlocks to-night
What waits for me? Perhaps old Elmin's ghost
Will ask me on the threshold of the dead
Why he was poisoned; with malignant leer
May tell my soul 'tis at his mercy there.
IRAD. You did not kill him.
ADAH. No, nor would have done.
But yet he'll know I smiled and let him die,
And shared his wealth.
IRAD. What justice can he claim,
Himself more criminal than thou?
ADAH. But he,
He may be mighty yonder. Were he weak,
Then I'd not fear. Fold me in thy strong arms;
A horror chills me.
IRAD. Fear not, I am near.
And where thou goest I will follow too.
ADAH. Ah, but once parted in the boundless night
How shall we meet again?
IRAD. We'll trust to Heaven.
ADAH. A specter haunts me, a dread, nameless Nothing.
I call the dead to ask them how they fare,
And Nothing answers. I would read the future

With shuddering heart; and through the parted curtain
I see that Nothing waiting.

IRAD. These are nightmares.
For even though death were one eternal sleep,
We've slept long hours in life and held them precious.

ADAH. We slept to wake again, found slumber here
One narrow rift between the blooming days.
What sleep is that whence none awaken? Surely
'Tis like no thing on earth. Oh, I am faint.

IRAD. Canst thou yet hear me? Speak, or move thy hand.

ADAH. I dig my fingers in the shore of life,
But the great current draws me.

IRAD. Ho there, help!

[*Enter Tubal-cain.*]

Her hand grows chilly.

TUBAL. Say your last adieu.
'Tis come, and none can stay it.

IRAD. Hast thou more,
Message or last petition?

ADAH. I have loved thee.
Forget me not if thou dost call my name,
And Nothing answer. Could we relive our lives
Unchanged, the same, how sweet it were. Goodby.

(*Dies.*)

IRAD. What, is it ended?
TUBAL. Let us veil her face.
IRAD. No, wait a while. The moon holds down its torch
To learn if this be death. The muscles move.
She'd speak again.
TUBAL. 'Tis the deceiving light.
There, clouds encase the moon; and in the dark
You cannot hear her breathe.
IRAD. All silent, yes.
TUBAL. May none disturb her tomb.
IRAD. One night in sport
She donned my armored glove, which tight I gripped,
And swore to hold her thus against a world.
But playful, slipping back the hand within,
She fled and mocked me. What I held was cold,
Empty and hollow. So these earthy fingers
I hold as in a vice; but that within,
Beyond my reach, has slipped from me and gone.
TUBAL. Last daughter of an ancient line was she.
And in her childless bed the race of Cain
Forever ends. Ah, well, 'tis better so.
I'm old; I've watched the withering world too long
To gild illusions. Yet it leaves us lonely,
We cold survivors.
IRAD. "Better so." You too
Would echo Noah. Never child shall heir

That growing curse that like a river swelled,
In which each reckless generation poured
Its tributary taint. And yet was not
Her soul a thing of wonder, and her life
A lamp mysterious, lighted from on high?
Is God so wasteful when He plans a world
Of such rare marble as the lives of men,
He'll count as worthless rubbish every stone
Found useless in His building? Will He not,
In some great treasure-house beyond the grave,
Preserve them still, nay, find them fitting there
Into some vast design unhinted here?

TUBAL. Think that which gives you joy. I've watched too long
What mad economy those prodigals
Who rule the world employ. And life is hewn
From quarries inexhaustible, more cheap
Than any wayside stone, 'tis everywhere.
My loves have quarried out a thousand blocks;
My hate has cracked a thousand. Let it go.
Yet a few hours I'll roll into my grave
Like a lost pebble. But the time till then,
That interval is mine; my life to me
As precious as 'tis cheap to God. Nay, boy,
Ne'er rack your head nor break your heart against
A granite wall. We'll bury her in state.
And then we'll live.

IRAD. Not I. The time is past
When thus I reasoned. Were no life beyond,

No justice here, yet in my dying hour,
If I could feel I'd toiled for something more
Than life and pleasure, I'd create myself
What gods denied, and dream it into being;
Project my spirit through eternity
From that one hour as center, and drink in
What earth could never give, the blessed sense
Of widening sympathy, the calm approval
Of that still monitor who in our breast
Weighs good and evil.

TUBAL. Where have you unearthed
This ancient heirloom conscience? Did gray Noah,
With other musty relics of old days,
Preserve you this? I mind when I myself
Had such a plaything. Memory's a strange world.
Sometimes there is a kind of phantom boy
Comes from its realm to vex me.

IRAD. What was he?

TUBAL. Like and not like to me. He found the way
To fuse the steel from heaven's pelting rocks;
And he enjoyed some things that you and I
Would find but tedious. Well, your path is yours,
And I'll go mine. Pray, can I serve you further?

IRAD. Only, I pray you, see that none intrude
On our last parting.

TUBAL. None shall dare. Goodnight.

[*Exit Tubal-cain.*]

IRAD (*alone*). How ghastly in the moonlight
shows the print
Of death upon her features, how unlike
The rosy glow of sleep, whose breathing lip
Still murmurs with the drowsy whir of dreams.
She tells me nothing. Has she aught to tell?
Is she more wise than I, or is all wisdom
For her one blank? Shall we e'er meet again?
And should we dwell in everlasting joy,
Whose joys were all perverted here, what pleasure,
Acceptable to God, were sweet to us?
Or shall we change our inmost nature so
That what was dull grows dear, and former sweet
Becomes abhorred? Such fundamental change
Would loose the bonds of being, and dissolve
All cherished attributes and human ties.
Or is all evil such by local laws,
Though penal here permissible elsewhere?
In vain we query, yet our bankrupt souls,
On earth impoverished, long for wealth in Heaven,
And knock and knock, though never answered.
Hark,
Thou God entrenched in night and nothingness,
Thou God of Noah, who by word and sign
Told him the Flood would come. I ask of Thee
One token only, which mere man would grant,
Had he the power. If those You cancel here,
Unfit for earthly needs, find home beyond,

Grow pure beside Thee and are blest indeed,
Let the moon shine unclouded while I pace
This chamber's length. But if in worlds beyond,
Even as in this, we prove abortive seed,
And destined for decay, then let yon cloud
O'ershade the orb it neighbors, bringing night
In my mid journey.

[*He paces slowly the length of the colonnade. The moon meanwhile shines uninterruptedly.*]

Shall I hold it true?
The windy vapor licked its golden round,
Yet turned and blew not o'er it. Once again,
Great Lord of Heaven, now I'll change the sign.
If death have life in store, make dark the moon
In my mid path; but if 'tis all despair
Then keep her beaming.

[*He paces the colonnade again. The moon shines uninterruptedly as before.*]

Ah, 'tis even so.
God needs must be, else how had Noah known
What never man could guess; but that dread God
Has other business in the growing worlds
Than cheering wasted lumber. Be it so.
Come, thou cold sweetheart, lay thy breast on mine.
We're something each to other yet, or were.

We'll pray no longer; God's forgotten us
In the great plan of things; but we, belovèd,
We'll not forget. We've yet some hours till dawn.

CURTAIN.

ACT V.

TIME. One or two days later.

PLACE. The edge of the mountain top not far from the temple. The waters are almost on a level with it.

[*Enter Irad and Tubal-cain.*]

TUBAL. The skies grow dark anew.

IRAD. Their gleam of light
Was sent in mockery. Once again the winds
Blow damp and boding; clouds entomb the sun,
Reviving night and fear.

TUBAL. Is ocean rising?

IRAD. Not yet, but soon it must. An evil grin
Goes wandering o'er its corrugated face,
Anticipating prey.

TUBAL. A gruesome sight.

IRAD. Ay, is it not? See where for leagues it stretches,
All flecked with foam, like mottled pards at play.
There swim the rotting planks of nameless wrecks
That vainly dared the Deluge. Forest trees,
Washed out from guttered hills, go floating by
With bones amid their branches. There we read
Our own to-morrow.

TUBAL. Yonder waits in ocean
Our old white-bellied friend to give us greeting.
Well, 'tis his hour. Why should I tear my lungs
In the vain howl for mercy?

[*Music is heard from the temple.*]

IRAD. What is that?
TUBAL. A knell, or equal. Our good friends have sworn,
Iban and all the rest, if death must come,
To die like Cainites reveling. Three whole days
They've kept a banquet saueed with poison waiting
The signal of the sky. They view it now
All draped in death. They're at their final feast.
We two are left.
IRAD. Why drank you not with them?
TUBAL. The mere brute instinct hugging life perhaps.
A tough old leaf am I, that tightly clings
Even on the wintry tree. Or sportsman's blood,
That loves to fight the battle out, nor whine
Because we lose.
IRAD. For two nights past I've had
A haunting vision, never taking shape,
But whispering hope and comfort.
TUBAL. Well, to-morrow
You'll test its prophecy.
IRAD. Not so; it pointed
Beyond the morrow. If it whisper truth

Death's but a turnstile; if deluding dream,
Then let me die deluded; better so
Than drugged in drunken stupor.

TUBAL. As you will.
I've caused a thousand deaths, nor ever asked
About the future; I'll not plague it now
For my one funeral.

IRAD. All is hushed behind us.

TUBAL. Yea, Iban's rhapsodies are done. He sleeps,
As often earlier, o'er his cup; nor knows
What ushers come to bear him hence, nor fears
Though they be strange and cold.

IRAD. 'Twere wrong to leave them
Neglected as they died while life is ours.
Come, let us lay the dead in reverent state,
And say a last goodby.

TUBAL. Small care have they
Who wrap their winding sheet or close their eyes,
We now, or ocean soon. But yet we'll go.

[*Exeunt Irad and Tubal-cain. After a pause the ark of Noah floats near the mountain peak and anchors. Noah appears on it. Enter Irad from the temple with his head bowed in emotion.*]

IRAD. I had not thought to care; but such a scene,

The grim burlesque of joyful banquets gone,
Is ghastly contrast. Ha! what's here?
NOAH. Thou being
That tread'st this lonely eyrie, marked by God
Last haven for His chosen, who art thou,
Survivor or wan phantom?
IRAD. Who I am
Thou need'st not know nor question. Weigh thine anchor
And get thee gone. This rocky buttress here
Will crack thy hull like nutshells if the wind
But veer behind thee.
NOAH. He who wields the wind
With me is pilot. Thou art gaunt and worn,
But like to one I knew.
IRAD. If thou knew'st good
Spare thy dull eulogy; if thou knew'st evil
I've suffered that should make detraction dumb.
My part in life is ended; count me dead,
Nor vex me more. Land not thy laughing crew
To mock our shore of mourning. Turn thy prow
To happier havens.
NOAH. Art thou Irad?
IRAD. Nay,
I'm but a cipher which the waves will wipe
From off the slate of being.
NOAH. Thou art he.
Unhappy man, the storms that wrenched thy life
Have left their traces.

IRAD. Yea, if you would know it,
The dead have had revenge. Didst think to find me
Obese and pampered, who have daily watched
The death of all I loved, and nightly lain
Upon the rack of conscience? But our nerves
Grow numb with suffering. Speak whate'er you will;
'Tis naught to me.

NOAH. One dear to both of us
Pursued thy flight.

IRAD. Ask not for him; God took him.
I would have burned in fire by inches for him.
Fate willed not so.

NOAH. Ah, well, we held him dead;
Yet hope dies hard.

IRAD. God curses all who love me.

NOAH. He lives in heaven, is spared the lifelong toil
Of earth's lone pioneers. He died for thee,
Bequeathing thee to those he loved.

IRAD. Would rather
This head had been the first that ocean drowned!

NOAH. Arm not thy heart in this defiant mood,
As if thy kin were foes; nor think reproach
Is on my lip. What's done is done, abhorred
Alike by me and thee. Thy past and thou
Be kept forever separate.

IRAD. Would they were,
That I, rejoicing, like a babe new-born

Might feel thy love, if thou canst love me still.
But 'tis not so.

NOAH. Thy gloom has tutored thee
To read all life awry.

IRAD. Nay, rather turned
These eyes within to read a truth severe.
My lesson's learned. I'll blot no more with blood
The record of my life, which sealed to-night
Goes up in God's great archives.

NOAH. Heaven forbid!
The wind of death blows o'er thy rock; the waves
Already make it slippery. Come with me.
The love of God is wide, and meaner souls
Float here to safety; why should one like thine
Go down in darkness? Haste, embark; we'll steer
For the glad haven of a fairer world.

IRAD. And wilt thou venture this, remembering all?

NOAH. And will I not? I left thy doom to God,
And God preserved thee. Now I'll fight no more
Against the welling love within me. Come!

IRAD. Where should I go? to lay foundation deep
For some new world to last till time is gray?
Wilt thou dig up the grave of Cain, that thence
The plagues God buried there may walk again,
And taint thy healthy children?

NOAH. These are words.
Thou'rt wild with want and suffering.

IRAD. Nay, I'm wise
With wisdom burned upon my brain in fire.
The love was deep that would have sheltered me,
For that God bless thee. But my part in life
Is all to cease, my praise and duty there.
Thou know'st not what a cursèd heritage
Is blood of Cain. With me the evil stream
Goes ever underground. No child through time
Shall call me father; but the peopled years
Will bless my name that I'd no part in them.
In that I'll know a patriarch's joy. Go on.
Here I remain.

NOAH. Will God count one whose courage
Would die as martyr for mankind, to save
The nations from himself, unworthy saving?
What stolid seaman, picked for life with me,
Had dared as much?

IRAD. Perchance, but, brave or mean,
Their veins are full of growth and mine decay.
If there be life beyond the grave, we'll meet
Where we may live forever and be glad.
If not, 'twill be some consolation still
To gain my long-lost reverence for myself,
And die a man.

NOAH. Thou speak'st like one whose purpose
Was breathed from God. Who shall gainsay His will?
Yet this gray head will whiten in a night
If here I leave thee.

IRAD. Mourn not thou for me.
And yet forget me not, for I may soon
Live only in thy love.
NOAH. No, life eternal
Is waiting yonder. God Himself declared it
By seer and vision.
IRAD. Yea, these gilded creeds,
I trust them not; in death they ring but hollow.
Let others lull the heart with lotus dreams
Of certainties unproved, I scorn their charm.
But throwing all upon a gambler's chance,
I'll dare to count the odds and yet believe,
In blindness clinging.
NOAH. Scorn not thou religion.
It is the rainbow where the light of truth
Broke up on human tears, a thing of earth,
Yet sign of light in heaven.
IRAD. So we'll trust.
The winds are wheeling round, the waves roll inland,
All churned in froth and dotted deep with rain.
The storm is here. Begone, nor dare to tarry.
Thou bear'st a world; wreck not such precious freight
By longer dallying.
NOAH. Yet you will not come?
VOICES FROM THE ARK. There, cut the anchor or we're lost! Away!

IRAD (*as the ark floats away*). Farewell! forget me not! In our adieu
New world and old forever say goodby.
NOAH (*from the distance*). God be thy friend! We'll meet again beyond.

[*Enter Tubal-cain.*]

TUBAL. The night comes tumbling down like caving sand,
With rain and whirlwind. 'Tis a noble hour
To bide here lonely with the dead. Hello!
Ho, Irad, boy!
IRAD. I'm here.
TUBAL. Thy voice is strange.
Give me thy hand. Is it the ocean spray
Makes it so clammy cold?
IRAD. No ghost am I,
If that's your fear. How sweeps before the wind
The feathery foam; and bolts begin to peal
And bicker overhead. Were it not easy
To shock with death beneath such martial music,
That keys the will to battle? Let it come!
TUBAL. This waiting chills the heart. Would ocean took
Corporeal form with which a man could fight;
Or sent as champion from its dismal camp
Some monster of the deep. We'd warm our blood
In deadly grapple, sweetening with revenge
The pang of dying.

IRAD. How the thunder grows!
What doors blow to in heaven? who enter there?
What messengers of haste to tell the news
That Cain's last remnant dies to-night, the race
That vexed the eternal council is no more.
Oblivion absolute beyond belief
Mows down their memory. Never king nor sage
Shall model laws from them, nor sculptor view
Their cunning carvings; bard nor architect
Be taught by them. Nor shall the coming years
Know aught except that like a glorious flame
They burnt and passed away. Their name shall be
A synonym for all that God abhors;
And buried deep beneath the wave-washed hills
Their splendor lie forever, while the law
By which they perished molds creation still.

FINIS.

OTHER POEMS

ARMISTICE

There lies a world far off in central space
Where men have perished all, and beast and bird
Have followed after. Nothing there has life,
Save the rank vegetation, hiding deep
In its soft lap of shade and living green
Forgotten bones and tumbling walls of towns.
Here Michael and the lost archangel once
Met in their wanderings. Years had passed by thousands
Since their last meeting. Sad was Satan's face,
And sad grew Michael's gazing. Days of old
Came rushing on the memories of them both,
When by the courts of God as friend with friend
They moved, and conscious strength that knew no peer
Save in each other, drew their spirits close
In mutual brotherhood, twin stars of Heaven.
Then Satan spoke: "We meet where man is gone,
This bone of old contention; nought is here
To fight for longer; now let battle rest.
Come, ancient brother, one short day and night
Let good and evil be a thing forgot,
And all these bitter centuries. Let us sit
And talk together here beneath the trees,
As we were used in Heaven long ago."
And Michael answered not, but doubting stood;

Then Satan took the angel's harp, and sang
To music sad a song of meaning strange.

And dost thou shrink to clasp thy hand in mine?
We both are servants of the will Divine,
And thou shalt know it well by proof and sign
  In that far day when all shall have reward.
Nor saviour here art thou, nor tempter I,
For all the race of man are things gone by;
None curse me here beneath this empty sky;
  Why dost thou linger, why am I abhorred?

Nor good nor evil dwells in stones and herbs,
Or where the hand of God the thunder curbs;
Nor good nor ill the ocean's deep disturbs;
  In man alone we ever met and warred;
Sweet peace was ours before his race began;
Harsh battle since through all the ages ran;
Now in this world that hears no more of man
  Why dost thou linger, why am I abhorred?

Worlds, worlds enough there are where we may meet
To war in peopled square and clashing street;
But now one hour of armistice were sweet,
  In deserts wide one fount with living sward.
Thou knowest not what lonely things we are,
Cold shadows from the Light that walks afar.
Come, brother, come; no cause is here for war.
  Why dost thou linger, why am I abhorred?

Thus sang the Soul of Mystery, and prevailed.
And all day long upon a grassy knoll,
Princes of good and evil now no more,
But friend with friend, they rested. Far below
In a great valley lay the skeletons
Of some old battle, whelmed in weeds and fern,
And roots of banyans curled around their bones.
Northward, a huge square mass of shimmering green,
Its corners beveled by the wind and rain,
Vine-clad a crumbling fortress lay. No flag
Fluttered above its ramparts; none could tell
If this were tyrant's hold or Freedom's shrine.
Southward a heap of grassy mounds proclaimed
Where once had been a city; homes and baths,
Soft haunts of luring sin and dungeons dread,
And churches towering Godward,—all were now
But tangled hillocks and the mantling brier.
The upas dripped its poison on the ground
Harmless; the silvery veil of fog went up
From moldering fen and cold, malarial pool,
But brought no taint and threatened ill to none.
Far off, adown the mountain's craggy side
From time to time the avalanche thundered, sounding
Like sport of giant children, and the rocks
Whereon it smote re-echoed innocently.
Then in the silence Lucifer again
Struck music from the angel's harp and sang.

I am the shadow that the sunbeams bring,
I am the thorn from which the roses spring;
Without the thorn would be no blossoming,
  Nor were there shadow if there were no gleam.
I am a leaf before a wind that blows,
I am the foam that down the current goes;
I work a work on earth that no man knows,
  And God works too,—I am not what I seem.

There comes a purer morn, whose stainless glow
Shall cast no shadow on the ground below,
And fairer flowers without the thorn shall blow,
  And earth at last fulfill her parent's dream.
Oh, race of men who sin and know not why,
I am as you, and you are even as I;
We all shall die at length, and gladly die;
  Yet even our deaths shall be not what they seem.

  Then Michael raised the golden lyre, and struck
A note more solemn soft, and made reply.

There dwelt a doubt within my mind of yore,
I sought to end that doubt and labored sore;
But now I search its mystery no more,
  But leave it safe within the Eternal's hand.
The tiger hunts the lamb and yearns to kill,
Himself by famine hunted, fiercer still;
And much there is that seems unmingled ill;
  But God is wise, and God can understand.

All things on earth in endless balance sway,
Day chases night and night succeeds the day;
And so the powers of good and evil may
  Work out the purpose that His wisdom planned.
Eternal day would parch the dewy mold,
Eternal night would freeze the lands with cold;
But wise was God who planned the world of old;
  I rest in Him, for He can understand.

Yet good and evil still their wills oppose;
And, serving both, we still must serve as foes
On yon far globe that teems with human woes;
  And Sin thou art, though God work through thy hand.
But here the race of man is now no more;
The task is done, the long day's work is o'er;
One hour I'll dream thee what thou wert of yore,
  Though changed thou art, too changed to understand.

  All day sat Michael there with Lucifer,
Talking of things unknown to men, old tales
And memories dating back beyond all time.
And all night long beneath the lonely stars,
That watched no more the sins of man, they lay,
The angel's lofty face at rest against
The dark cheek scarred with thunder. Morning came,
And each departed on his separate way;
But each looked back and lingered as he passed.

THE "MAN-EATER"

The night is calm, nor threatens ill,
Save where two glow-worms glimmer still
In shadows distant.
Unmoving while the moments go,
Beyond the Kaffirs' tents they glow,
Bright, strange, insistent.

Beneath the moonlight's ghostly hush
Low crouches in the lonely brush
A figure tawny,
Like some old sphinx in granite carved,
With hollow flank and visage starved,
And muscles brawny.

Patient, as heathen priests of eld
Round gods of blood their vigil held,
He waits unsleeping,
Yet tense as springs of bended steel,
With lip drawn back and planted heel,
His vigil keeping.

A starvial god he worships there,
Unwhom our fathers offered prayer
When earth was younger,
A power for whom those burning eyes
Are altar lamps of sacrifice,
The god of hunger.

EARLY DEATH

Down in the grasses that girdle the stream
  Sits she in light where the summer is warm,
Claiming the promise of maidenhood's dream,
  Weaving the wonders the future may form.
Daisies in dozens are round on the mold,
One she has plucked and its petals has told
To a rime that her grandmother chanted of old.

Rich man—poor man—beggar man—thief,
Doctor—lawyer—merchant—chief.

Which shall it be that the sibyls unfold,
  Hero or hireling, the weak or the well,
Poverty's shadow or sunshine of gold?
  Nay, I could tell thee but shudder to tell.
Wan are thy features and wistful to see;
Others may dream of a bridegroom to be,
But what have such maidens in common with thee?

Rich man—poor man—beggar man—thief,
Doctor—lawyer—merchant—chief.

Rich is he, rich with the plunder of time,
  Poor in the pity a lover should bring,
Beggar he is for the joy of thy prime,
  Thief of thy youth and the dream of thy spring;
Doctor he is who all sorrow can heal,
  Lawyer whose pleading no tongue can gainsay,

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Merchant whose traffic no lip may reveal,
  Chieftain of chieftains whom all must obey.
Slowly drop through thy fingers lean
Petal and prophecy,—can it mean
That thou knowest the bridegroom who comes
    unseen?

VOICES FROM ELFLAND

I. The Appeal of the Fairies

We make our home among the gurgling brooks,
Or through the woods beneath the fragrant pine;
We tent beneath the autumn leaves, and float
O'er star-lit lake on flower and walnut shell.
A happy life is ours, we never knew
The pain or grief or care that mortals know,
Nor ever steeped within our bubbling cup
The stagnant herb of bitter melancholy.
Yet oft the groans of mortals, and the breath
Of passionate storms that shake their spirits, come
To jar our placid world. The victim's blood
Flows gross and feverish from his burning heart
Around our dewy grass; and everywhere
We hear the voice of aspirations vain,
Till the hot air is from your cities blown
As from a prairie fire. We come to loathe
Your fierce extremes, your hate, your sultry kiss,
Your joys that burn themselves to pain, your all.
We hate your crucifix, for there survives
Man's endless anguish on the dying face;
We hate your creed, which forces on our lives
Your alien sorrows; grief has made your drops
Of holy water scald like burning tears.
Sweet flow the hours when ye are far away;

Beneath the moon we lie at rest, and breathe
The scent of leaf and blade, and water-falls
Made pure by winnowing air. And blest it was,
Ere man had lived, o'er earth to roam at will
By tranquil lake and laughing sea, and valleys
Where never grave was dug nor tear was shed,
While yet the world was ours, nor yet had come
With you the clamorous war of sense and soul.
Mad creatures, mixed of clay and fire, whose eyes
Are blinded with your tears, whose ears are deaf
With dying sobs, that ye nor see nor hear
When hills are fair and cataracts call aloud,
What do ye in this lovely world of ours?
Here, like a stranded fish or drowning bird,
With glazing eyes, in foreign wonderlands
Ye pant for wonders in far, kindred worlds,
And live not here nor there. Then leave to us
This earth, whose use you never understand.
Here, when your stormy race has ceased to be,
On moon-lit nights our happy feet will dance
Above your grassy hillocks, undisturbed
By those burnt ashes from Prometheus' torch.

II. The Stolen Child

Beneath the reddening oak tree Margery found
A crowd of little people, some in green,
And some in red and brown. In the faint light
Their dress seemed all of withered autumn leaves.
The dim, gray twilight and the starbeams mixed

Above their quaint, peaked faces, and grotesque
Unchildlike forms, that yet were childish small.
Then one among them blew a trumpet flower;
And all the rest from harps of elder, strung
With spider's film, or else through flutes of grass
Sent up a piping music, mixed with song.
"Come, little princess, come with us," they sang;
"We waited long; and long has waited too
Your happy home with us, your fairy home.
'Tis dark and none will miss you. Sweet it is
In elfland. Little princess, come with us.
Our fathers lived with yours in Paradise
Ere Adam sinned; brothers they were, so close
Were once our bloods. We are the only race
Who never ate the sad Forbidden Tree.
Man ate, and good and evil tear him daily;
The angels ate, and even their joys are stern;
And Satan ate, we will not talk of him,
Nor know him. Little princess, come with us.
But all the elves through all the years have lived
Like happy children; still for us alone
The old untainted Eden breathes from clumps
Of hazel thicket or from running brook,
Or orchards dropping with the peach and pear.
Where evil is not is no need of good;
And where nor good nor evil is, is peace
And peaceful dream, all the sweet, innocent joy
Of childhood. Little princess, come with us.
You are our cousin, so we come to love you;

You dream like us, and so we understand you;
You are a child, we'll keep you so forever.
If you grow old with men, the fatal juice
Of that sad Tree will work within your veins
Hopes never satisfied, and maddening storms
You wish not. Little princess, come with us."

Dusk deepened into night, and morning came;
But Margery came not, nor was seen again.

THE LAST NIGHT OF CAPUA

I

Far off beneath the stars
  Camped cold on dewy grass
The wolf-nursed brood of Mars,
  Hacked helm and stained cuirass,
  And shields of dinted brass.

The old centurion's cheek
  Wrinkled with laughter grim;
"Dream-children of the Greek,
  Who soften heart and limb
  O'er lyre and bumper's brim,

"Ye had your gold and pearls,
  Your feast and perfumed bath,
Your song and laughing girls;
  Ye had, the Roman hath;
  Now wake and feel his wrath.

"Strength rules the world and will,
  The strength despising joy
That lives but to fulfill;
  Such force shall Rome employ
  To build, or to destroy."

II

High arched the halls and rich
  O'er gem and purple gown;
From fount and graven niche
  The marble gods looked down
  On those in Capua's town.

Rare wine in golden bowls
  The mantling poison held,
While o'er their parting souls
  Luxurious music swelled,
  Their sires had loved of eld.

"Farewell to life," they cried,
  "To Rome defiant scorn;
Like men we lived and died,
  And drank from Plenty's horn
  Glad night and joyous morn.

"White arms have lulled our rest,
  Old wine has warmed our veins;
We shared with friend and guest
  Carved hall and chiming strains,
  And all that Greece contains.

"Jeer on, ye Roman powers,
  Who toil, ye know not why;
The wiser choice was ours,
  Strength to be glad and die;
  Sweet were the days gone by.

"Life's fairest gift we gained,
Soft bliss and golden ease;
Now that the cup is drained
Let Rome enjoy the lees."
So darkness covered these.

THE COMING OF PEACE

"When cometh Peace?" the heathen wailed of old
From rack and blazing home; and God replied:
"Not yet, while passions fierce and uncontrolled
Make Peace a nation's harlot, not a bride.
Not while the pang that searches nerve and vein
Alone can rouse to life the stagnant soul
In brutal lands, where ease from war and strain
But heralds lust and fills the drunkard's bowl."

"When cometh Peace?" went up the Orient's groan.
Not yet, while life becomes it own worst foe
With teeming birth, and War's red axe alone
Through human forest hews the room to grow;
Not yet, while power is still the victim's dream,
And tyranny the meanest slave's delight,
Where Tamerlane and Ghengis Khan but seem
Composite pictures of the men they smite.

"When cometh Peace?" is now the world's appeal.
Not yet, though far her hastening steps we hear;
Not while her bristling angels, armed in steel,
On cowering lands impose the truce of fear,
Not while we force a code on murmuring foes
Which our own rulers violate and annul;
Not while the only peace each nation knows
Would give themselves the Land Debatable.

"When cometh Peace?" Upon the mountains now
Those beauteous feet the gladsome tidings bear;
But I shall see her bridal not, nor thou;
Nor man shall win till man has learned to wear.
No cry of bards, no long-conferring kings
Shall ever make the battle's thunder dumb;
When winter's blasts are o'er the violet springs,
When earth is ripe for Peace then Peace will come.

THOUGHTS ON OPENING WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY

I turn with awe this ponderous volume o'er,
  This household counselor, these finely wrought
And hammered keys that open door on door
  Through the vast treasury of a people's thought.

I linger here o'er Milton's quoted phrase
  As Indian rajahs o'er a diamond may,
And see sometimes within its facets blaze
  A gleam that flashed from God's eternal day.

And these old roots of words, that seem to stand
  So dull and dry upon the printed page,
Take on beneath imagination's hand
  The charm of history and the rime of age.

Here's evolution more than Darwin taught
  In these ancestral footprints; here behold
The spirit growth of nations, word and thought
  Developing each other from of old.

What spirit first upon his lonely beach
  Felt solitude like ocean round him roll,
And launched the ships of passion-laden speech,
  Columbus-like, to find a brother soul?

What words were those that ventured outward bound,
Those clumsy craft, those first rude pioneers,
Where now the mighty galleons of sound
Waft on the thought of twice a thousand years?

Were they the brute's low call of pain and greed,
Or sounds man echoed back and knew not why?
Or growing notes to voice a growing need,
Like Caliban's half-formulated cry?

And through the centuries since what change was here
As click and guttural's broken hints were turned
To spirit-molded music, breathing clear,
To bear what Plato dreamed and Newton learned.

Still 'mid the minds that think and hearts that feel,
Expressing what was never yet expressed,
New ships of sound are launched on chiming keel,
To bear some new Columbus through the west.

Still many a word is token and no more,
Frail envoy of a thought no speech can bear;
Who shall interpret, say, these letters four,
This one word "Life"? The universe is there.

Or take this other, "Love"; its meanings go
From height to depth through vast creation's whole,
From flowers that waft their pollen to and fro
To God's all-seeing eye and moving soul.

And here, the joy of life, the balm of death,
The star of martyrs, comfort of mankind,
Is this word "Faith," a syllable, a breath,
A marsh-fire's lamp, and boundless night behind.

Brave Webster, noble Webster, you did well;
But yet through many a year must language grow
Ere man to man shall have the power to tell
One half the things that now we think we know.

A VISION OF EVIL

I saw a realm at midnight still,
(Who knows if this be dream or true?)
Where earth's discarded souls of ill
The scorn of God together blew.
There floats unceasing to and fro
The chaff from heaven's threshing floor,
Through endless ages waning slow,
For evil fades for evermore.

They waste like leaves on winter's tree;
(Who knows if this be dream or true?)
The newly come are fair to see,
As when they walked with me and you.
But souls of eld are faint and thin
Like vapors blown on ocean shore,
And life is moldering deep within,
For evil fades for evermore.

There moves Napoleon splendid still,
(Who knows if this be dream or true?)
With flashing eyes and kingly will,
As when he rode to Waterloo.
But Timur scarce has form of man,
And pride and memory all are o'er;
The stars gleam through his phantom wan,
For evil fades for evermore.

The queen Antonius loved and kissed,
(Who knows if this be dream or true?)
Is thinner now than parting mist,
And mind and will have withered too.
And nought is left of Priam's boy,
Who drew the ships to Ilion's shore,
For, sinful wrath or selfish joy,
All evil fades for evermore.

And round them moves, a ghostly blur,
(Who knows if this be dream or true?)
The Soul of Evil, Lucifer,
As he has done the ages through.
He thinks no more of thrones and wars,
No trace is his of glory o'er;
He floats like fog across the stars,
His power is fading evermore.

WASTED SEEDS

The seed that never grew
Had life within the germ;
But skies withheld their dew,
And fields but gave the worm;
What matter? Earth has seeds to spare and not a few.

The soul that never bloomed
Had dreams of God within;
But want its life consumed,
And curse for others' sin;
What matter? Earth has souls enough though these were doomed.

The tribe that fades away
Had visions fair as we;
But withered stalks are they,
Whose race shall cease to be;
What matter? Earth has tribes enough though these decay.

What matter? Yet the cry
Goes up and is not stilled;
Life's verdure waxes high
Where love and wisdom tilled;
But who shall hush the sob of wasted seeds that die?

THE BUTTERFLY

The Man

Dancer throned at Summer's board,
Butterfly,
Even while thy wine is poured
Death is nigh.
One short hour of balm and sun
Thou hast had;
Lo, at thy feast the skeleton;
Why so glad?

The Insect

Hast thou ever known extreme
Joys and fears?
Did not then a moment seem
Like to years?
When thy heart was keen with grief,
Or with glee,
Were not hours to others brief
Long for thee?
Time's a word; whole worlds are found
In drops of dew,
And eternity's vast round
In moments few.

While I sip the wine of youth
From the cup,
Dreams that last as long as truth
Bubble up.
Ages past and more to come
Live I through
While but once the pendulum
Swings for you.
When I part from summer's beam,
Leaf and flower,
All eternity will seem
But an hour.

THE MAN

Art thou fly or Psyche, thou,
Learned so deep?
What do human spirits now,
Do they sleep?

THE INSECT

Fly or Psyche, who can tell?
A voice am I,
Speaking things you shall know well
By and by.
Life for me will be forgot
When I am through;
You must ask your Father what
It is for you.

Yet if they sleep, a dream has blest
The eyes that slept
Which all eternity compressed
Within it kept.

THE ORIOLE

Chorister of air,
  On the bough of spring,
What melodious throat and where
  Taught thee thus to sing?
From what isle remote
  Out of man's control,
Came thy clear, untroubled note,
    Oriole?

What did Eden lose
  That doth here endure,
Gushing forth as waters ooze,
  Effortless and pure?
Why can I not know,
  God in shape and rôle,
Whence thy heart rejoices so,
    Oriole?

When God made thy brain
  Like a silver bell,
Forged He other nerves of pain,
  Other joys as well?
Was the dream that poured
  Music in thy soul
Older than the Flaming Sword,
    Oriole?

Nay, too surely, bird,
More thy song conveyed
Through this human brain that heard
Than the brain that made.
Not thy voice, but one
Echoing in my soul,
Hints all truth, revealing none,
Oriole.

Yet at Wisdom's feet
Was learned thy mimic trill;
Soulless echoes thus repeat
God on Horeb's hill.
Deep in learning's maze
Delve we like the mole;
Thou hast drunk the Maker's days,
Oriole.

Truths there are that here
Reason cannot find,
Where her eyes are piercing clear,
Nathless color-blind.
Lights there are whose hues
Change creation's whole,
Which thy thoughtless song renews,
Oriole.

Music like thy staves
  Surely ne'er can flow
From our gilded galley-slaves,
  Living but to row.
Mightier lamps are dark,
  Dry wick and empty bowl;
What oil has fed thy tiny spark,
    Oriole?

God, whose fingers press
  Life's unthinking keys,
Pouring thoughts that none express
  Through such pipes as these,
When the skies are rent
  Like a rending scroll
Tell me what Thy music meant,
    Thy oriole.

THE NIGHT-WATCH

(*From a painting representing lions prowling at night around the ruins of Nineveh.*)

Slowly at midnight lone
Round dust and nodding stone
Of Nineveh o'erthrown
  The night-watch makes its round,
Bright burning eyes of awe,
Low purr and stealthy paw,
Soldiers that know no law
  Which man has found.

Well might the Buddhist seer
Think buried kings severe
Came back incarnate here
  In kindred beasts of prey.
And so we too the while,
Half with a doubting smile,
May dream, while that grim file
  Moves on its way.

Speak, thou mysterious guard,
Lank cheek and body scarred,
Find ye your penance hard
  Through all this vast of time,

Souls of the kings of eld,
Who against God rebelled,
Proud of the realms ye held,
  Drunken with crime?

Where now your answers glib,
Starved throat and hollow rib,
Long-fanged Sennacherib,
  Tiglath with yellow mane?
What wine has vengeance poured
In realms yet unexplored
For those who by the sword
  Slay and are slain?

Say, has a power been found
More strong than monarchs crowned?
Have those sharp swords you ground
  Failed there, so mighty here?
Have ye no truth to tell
Might fit the present well,
Where still your sons would swell
  The reign of fear?

Here where your wine ye quaffed,
At captives' anguish laughed,
And notched the hunter's shaft,
  What thoughts to-night are yours?
Cannot those silent jaws
Ope once in Mercy's cause,
To tell us God has laws
  And God endures?

Pass on with stealthy tread,
Brutes ravening to be fed,
Or souls of tyrants dead,
  Whiche'er ye be, goodnight.
O'er Nineveh's decay
For lions comes the day,
And for dead kings the sway
  Of Peace and Right.

SHAKESPEARE TO IMOGEN

Dear saint, my soul was marred and stained
That built thy shrine;
But holy, sweet, and unprofaned
It treasured thine.

Let this reveal while I and thou
Through years endure,
How worldly, sinful men may bow
To women pure.

Thou art not I, but art of me,
My child of thought,
The thing that I had longed to be,
And yet was not.

TRUTH

Truth veiled her face from men
In days of eld;
Glimpses alone since then
Have we beheld.

The Hebrew moved aside
That curtain's fold;
"Worship is truth," he cried
O'er rituals old.

The Greek with trembling hand
That face laid bare;
What he could understand
Was Beauty there.

Her veil the Roman drew
With martial awe;
He saw but what he knew,
And whispered, "Law."

The monk of Europe dreamed
In cloisters dim;
As inward vision seemed
Her face to him.

And we in glimpses rare
On that high brow,
O'er rights that all may share
See Freedom now.

Ah, Truth, the world's long dream
But shows us thee
As in some whirling stream
The stars we see.

Sweet face in fragments glassed
On waves that break,
Who shall from these at last
Thy image make?

THE DIVINE COMEDY OF TO-DAY

Inferno

Three faces in the crowd;
  What saw'st thou there?
Like Farinata's one was scarred and proud,
And still for all its pride left quivering bare
  Sin's agonized despair.

Purgatorio

Three souls amid the crowd;
  They passed like dreams;
With tearful eyes the second head was bowed;
But o'er it shone, like light on bitter streams,
  The sorrow that redeems.

Paradiso

Three worlds amid the crowd,
  So near yet far;
Joy kindled all the third like burning cloud;
Love rose, like Beatrice from her mystic car,
  To lead from star to star.

Three faces in the crowd,
  Life old and new.
Oh, soul of Dante, thus by God endowed,
Six centuries men have lived and died since you;
  And yet your song is true.

A FAIRY STORY

"Now tell me why is your hair so white,
You stern old man from across the way;
And why did you wait so long to-night
By the grassy grave where the roses lay?"
"You are young, my child, and to understand
You must live and suffer for many a day;
Come, I'll tell you a story of fairy land,
To help you in whiling the hours away."

Far under the wilds of the storm-swept snow
In the silent caves of the Northern Pole,
Where over the plains the whirlwinds blow,
Was the home of the elf-king Imranole.
All bright with silver and veined with gold
Were those caverns hammered by gnome and troll;
But lonely ever and wintry cold
Was the heart of the elfin Imranole.
But once on a night that was fierce with frost,
When the ice would burn you like burning coal,
A mortal maiden, whose way was lost,
Came, none know how, to the Northern Pole.
The icicles hung in her yellow hair
As her trembling feet o'er the threshold stole;
Without was the dark and the polar bear,
And she made her dwelling with Imranole.

Never a whisper nor mortal sound
  Was heard in those caves of the Northern Pole,
Where the maiden sat as the years rolled round,
  Taught and tended by gnome and troll,
Till her terror died, and a mighty love
  Over her heart like music stole;
And the bridal lamps gleamed bright above,
  As she knelt by her lover, soul to soul.
But there came a call from the realms of death,
  From the God of Sorrows, whom none control,
So hard is heaven to earth beneath;
  And she died on the bosom of Imranole.
They laid her deep in the frozen clay,
  And heaped the snow in a wintry knoll,
Where the Northern Lights at midnight play
  O'er the buried bride of the Northern Pole.
And there when the winds blow wild and bleak
  From ancient glacier and icy shoal,
The tear drops freeze on the withered cheek
  Of a lonely watcher,—'tis Imranole.
His hair streams white on the howling blast,
  And his beard waves white, like a floating scroll;
And I know his grief by a sorrow past,
  And the silent bond of a kindred soul.

"But really, truly, and was it so,
  You stern old man from across the way?
And why is your voice so strange and low,
  And why are you crying at what you say?"

"O child, sometime you will understand,
My friends are few, and my head is gray;
But this was a story of fairy land,
And the Northern Pole is far away."

THE SEACOAST IN WINTER

The stinging winds alternate freeze and burn;
Chill gleams the twilight where the sun went down,
Four threads of cloud across it, faint and stern,
Like scars across the lost archangel's frown.

Cold, dark, forbidding heaves the wintry surge;
The frozen rocks are drenched with icy spray;
One lonely steamer on the horizon's verge
Seems numbed and torpid, crawling on its way.

A fierce, strange thrill pervades all out-of-doors,
Grip of wild hands, half friendly and half foe;
The iron night grows darker down the shores;
Suffering yet glad I breast the winds that blow.

Here stirs the life that warmed the old sea-kings
To scourge the laggard blood in heart and vein,
The warrior joy that like Athena springs
Full armed and conquering from the head of Pain.

SCHOOL-GIRLS

They pass like flowers afloat
  On summer air,
Gold locket at the throat
  And wind-kissed hair.

Still fresh the dew of youth
  Around them falls;
Through visions robed like truth
  The future calls.

Speak not, their dream revere;
  Yet mourn we may
For other school-girls here
  Who dreamed as they.

How fare those now for whom
  Life beckoned splendid?
Unlike their dream and doom,
  Their vision ended.

No mighty grief nor wrong
  Could they disclose;
Dream tragedies are song,
  But life's are prose.

Yet mournful from the past
  Their words float hither:
"Few hopes will thunder blast;
  But many wither."

THE EVENTLESS TRAGEDY

A Dying Woman Speaks

Sister, remain and watch to-night.
  There are ghastly hours between twelve and morn;
And I think of what never has come to light,
  Of all in my life that has died unborn,
  Till the air seems filled with the whisperings
  Of the haunting ghosts of the unborn things,
    Now that my evil and good are done.

There was love, twofold in its mystic thrill,
With its soft inweaving of will in will,
And two worlds made one through the eyes of two;
But its death was old ere its life was new.
  And Sloth and Mammon bend hushed above
  The beautiful face of that still-born Love,
    Now that my sordid life is done.

There were voices of children in elflands green,
With a mother's ease like a hedge between;
Eyes she had longed for and dreamed of seeing,
Eyes that she never had called to being.
  And the air seems filled with the moan forlorn
  Of the clinging ghosts of the babes unborn,
    Now that my indolent life is done.

There was joy of nature and song and art,
That I might have nursed in my lonely heart,
Soft shoots that time would have rendered firm.
But they shrank and withered in bud and germ.
And my hours of boredom are coffined there
Where the thoughts of the mighty were mine to share,
Now that my aimless life is done.

There was need without and my wealth within,
And the pleasure that makes us of God's own kin
In a sympathy wide as the race of man.
But its whispers died ere they well began.
And the clerks of hell are in Midnight's tent
To audit the books of the trust I spent,
Now that my thoughtless life is done.

There were life-giving dreams for that near unseen,
That died in the march of our dull routine,
Things that God never had meant to die,
But we killed them within me—the world and I—
And the shades are in judgment, the doom deferring
Of a soul that quickened and died in stirring;
And the clocks of midnight are tolling one
For a life that was ended but ne'er begun,
For a life that was wasted, and now—is done.

THE VISIT TO THE OLD FARM

Far lies the cramped and clanging street
  Where now my paths of life are cast;
  Like withered leaves the buried past
Seems rustling here around my feet.

No tree that buds on all these lands,
  Nor tumbling wall, nor sagging rail,
  Nor tufted sod on plain or swale,
But bears the touch of buried hands.

'Tis haunted ground, rock, hill, and spring.
  Five generations of my dead
  Have worn it with their lifelong tread,
And made the soil a kindred thing.

In dreams through changing visions rolled
  Forgotten toil my hands pursue,
  While wakes the spell my childhood knew,
The unlonely loneliness of old.

Again behind the plowman's share
  The robin pecks with watchful eye;
  And through the blue and boundless sky
The darting swallows wheel in air.

The daisy falls, a twinkling spark,
  Where through the grass the mower drives;
  And childlike shrinks between the knives
The flower that bore the meadow lark.

Through yonder woods in winter hoar,
  When drearily moans the forest bleak,
  And frost makes tree and timber creak,
We fell the hermit trunks once more.

Loud rings the axe in woodlands lone;
  And gnarlèd oak and tapering ash
  With warning crack and shattering crash
Come thundering down on bush and stone.

Penurious life it was, and hard;
  But boundless sweep of vale and hill
  Enringed our day, and vast and still
Looked down the night from heaven o'er-
      starred.

Streams choose a random course, but then
  Flow ever there; our youth no less
  Builds random laws of happiness
By which we laugh or weep as men.

Still breathes the charm from rock and fall,
  From sprouting corn and crumpled fern,
  Lone, somber, sexless, dumb, and stern,
But luring as the siren's call.

Still solitude will own her child,
  And harsh old mother Nature hers;
  Unlaid the ghost of memory stirs,
The dream, the summons of the wild.

ON PLACING A TOMBSTONE OVER MY FATHER'S GRAVE

The air is hushed, and quiet all the scene;
  In sunlight gleam the kindred graves around;
As o'er these summer grasses, springing green,
  We place this stone above this lowly mound.

Unmarked he lived and unregarded died
  Who slumbers here; much dared, endured, and willed;
Seemed great to friends and God and none beside,
  Foundation deep where fates denied to build.

Yet, dust beloved, couldst thou but know how crowd
  Thick coming memories round thy noteless bed,
Thou might'st be proud to know thy children proud
  Of their unknown, unstained, unconquered dead.

Obscure and shunned the path 'twas his to go,
  Yet one at which the boldest heart might quail,
Through bitter, hopeless years descending slow
  Disease's dark, Apollyon-haunted vale.

Despair and anguish round on every hand,
  And Reason rocking on her crumbling throne,
Few sympathizing, none to understand,
  He fought his dreary fight unhelped, alone.

The hero's death is all his children's pride.
Is not his praise as great who dared to live,
When every day in lingering pain he died,
And death was all that life had left to give?

Less brave than Plassey's conquering chief or more
Was he, who watched through nights with anguish long,
To shun, Ulysses-like, that fatal shore
Where floats the opiate siren's drowsy song?

Failed every hope whence youths their manhood draw;
And Reason setting knew what night ensued;
Such foes as happier courage never saw
Walked through the dusk, and found him unsubdued.

And still his love for those he left behind,
While yet one spark of dying memory stayed,
Like sunset flames lit up that ruined mind,
Till darkness gathering wrapped the whole in shade.

O father flesh and brother spirit, still
From out thy dust thy voice ascends to me;
Whene'er in life shall bend my wavering will
Here will I kneel and draw in strength from thee.

Thine was the Roman face and Roman soul
  Of old Pompeii's sentry; father, thou
Saw'st clouds more dread than his o'er heaven roll,
  Stood'st faithful at thy post, and sleepest now.

Thou need'st no further honor, art but one
  Of many more, a long, unnoticed line;
Yet not in vain thy nameless task was done;
  The strength of nations roots in graves like thine.

Here o'er his dust we raise this humble stone;
  And be the dying words of Paul for him,
"A goodly fight I fought, my race I won,
  My faith I kept." Away, the night grows dim.

THE FAREWELL TO REASON

Sweet Comforter of other years,
I hear thy soft withdrawing tread;
Thy voice is yet within mine ears,
But sounds like echoes from the dead.

Now child and drudge and Folly hoar
Shall share at least some glimpse of thee;
But, blest Interpreter, no more
Shall thou and I companions be.

We traced the dome that Darwin piled,
With Herschel saw the planets roll,
And oft the evening hours beguiled
With Mozart's lyre and Plato's scroll.

Through thee the voice of wife and friend
Came chiming soft and silver clear;
'Twas thine those angel notes to blend
Which ruined mind shall never hear.

But now these chords too finely spun,—
This spirit-harp within my brain,—
I feel them snapping one by one,
Amid the dread no words explain.

I see behind the Flaming Sword,
The vales of Eden trod no more;
And bitter, dark, and unexplored
The alien deserts wait before.

THE CORN-HUSKERS

OR OLD NEW ENGLAND

In open field in autumn weather
We sat and husked the corn together;
No sound was heard but far and low
The rumbling cart and cawing crow.

The weather-beaten shocks around
Seemed hermits old with sun embrowned,
Above the stubble gaunt and bare
You half might think they knelt in prayer.

We spoke of him by Avon's stream,
Of Byron's fire and Shelley's dream,
What Huss endured and Luther wrought,
And Berkeley's fairy world of thought.

Still fast the yellow ears we stripped
Across the basket's edges slipped,
The withered stalks our fingers stirred
Kept rustling time to every word.

No scholars we; but hearts that long,
Find much where most they reason wrong;
And Truth herself seemed speaking near
By withered husk and ripened ear.

Now o'er the stubble gaunt and bare
Plods on the foreign hireling there;
And thou and I in autumn weather
No more shall husk the corn together.

With chilling blood and weary brow
I change romance for knowledge now;
And thou beneath the moldering ground
No longer tell'st what thou hast found.